

The Divided Heart



Lewiston cop²
The divided heart.

~~BLUE VALLEY~~

kansas city



public library

kansas city, missouri

Books will be issued only
on presentation of library card.

Please report lost cards and
change of residence promptly.

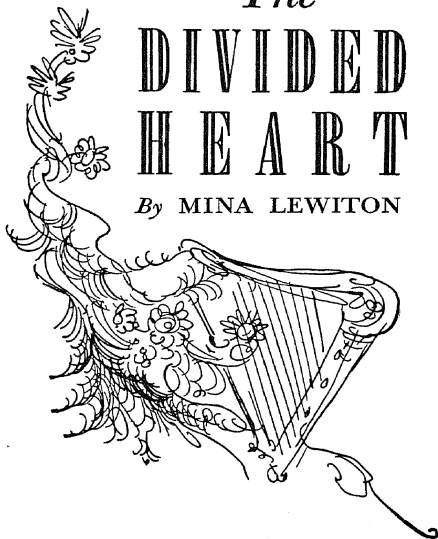
Card holders are responsible for
all books, records, films, pictures
or other library materials
checked out on their cards.



The Divided Heart

The
**DIVIDED
HEART**

By MINA LEWITON



DAVID McKAY COMPANY, INC.

New York

*Copyright, 1947, by
Mina Lewiton*

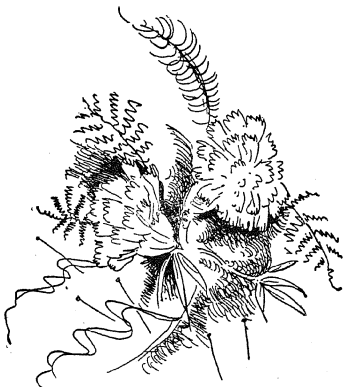
Ninth Printing October 1965

Printed in the United States of America

*For my friend Helen Hoke,
encouraging guide who first
proposed that so persistent a
theme in modern young lives be
introduced in this book.*

KANSAS CITY (MO.) PUBLIC LIBRARY

59 Young Adult
JUN 28 1966



A WHOLE little forest of candles firmly stood on the sheer white-icing cliff. One by one the fire caught each candle-tree. Then the candle-tree forest was ablaze. Blow, Julie, blow, they all shouted. In a second, she was thinking, in a second. Her mouth was the least bit aquiver and her face was burning hot. In a second because the cake was so beautiful with its tiny raging forest fire. They were

all waiting for her to blow. Hap began sorrowfully to sing

*She died of a fever
And no one could save 'er,
Alas, oh, alas . . .*

Because she was laughing now she could not round her lips to blow. Her father swept up and down the piano, the great major chords crashing into "Happy Birthday," with variations. And at last she blew out all fifteen candles. Her mother missed her cheek and kissed her ear instead. The carnations that were white had a cinnamon smell and Mother had remembered to put pins into the three-legged little pin-cushion on the foyer table. Everyone took a white carnation to wear home. Thank you, Julie, I had a lovely time. . . . A lovely time. . . . A lovely time. . . .

That was a Pleasant Thought, or, rather, a Pleasant Memory. It was the time for Pleasant Thoughts and Memories. Not asleep and not quite awake, Julie loved the minutes just before getting up. Through half-shut eyes and in a golden haze she saw her room. A bright tidy room. Even the books on the shelves had a gay air because there were so many colors of bindings. Side by side they stood, little bright bits of a patchwork pattern. An oblong of sunlight lay

like a checkered rug neatly in the middle of the floor, adding to the brightness and tidiness.

The square-paned window with its sunlit shade half-drawn was wide open. Back and forth the curtains rhythmically fluttered, whispering in the light breeze. *Then turn not pale beloved snail.* Out went the curtains. *But come and join the dance.* In came the curtains. *Will you won't you?* Out. *Will you won't you?* In. *Will you join the dance?* All the way out. She thought idly of words that ran along with sounds. Effortlessly they slipped into her head when she rode in trains and trolleys and said themselves over and over. All kinds of rhymes and odd words fitted the sound of train wheels.

Chimborazo, Chimborazo. . . .

Julie stretched her hand into the sunny oblong. She could feel the warmth on her fingers. From the chair beside her bed she lifted up a slender band of silver set with three small turquoise stones and slipped it on her arm. She was all at once awake, remembering this afternoon. Mother had said yes, if it were warm. Without getting out of bed she slid one foot out into the bright sunlight, testing its warmth with a toe as if she were going swimming. Warm as a nest of kittens.

She swung both her feet down and sat on the edge



of the bed. Bringing her tightly clenched fists to her stomach, with arms akimbo, she began slowly and thoughtfully to row a boat. Her father's instruction had been all theoretical so far, but this afternoon there was going to be a real boat on a real lake. Letting go of the imaginary too-heavy oars, she tiptoed over to the closet.

She opened the door and peered inside, reaching for her bathrobe. Overhead on the shelf there stood the sailboat her father had made years ago, when she was nine or ten. The paint, though, was new. Dad had thought again of the boat when he had come back from the Army and had painted the wood red. He wanted to see it sail again and had especially asked where she kept it. Perhaps he would want to sail it this afternoon after the rowing. She reached up and ran her fingers along the smooth shining red surface. At least she knew it was red and shining, though she could not begin to see its color in the dim twilight of the closet.

She shut the closet door softly and, turning, saw her reflection in the dresser mirror. She looked severely at herself, trying hard to look past fifteen. Her face and features, she considered, were too small and the copper-penny hair, though it was braided tightly round her head, had short ends that curled

about her forehead as though she were a baby. Only her legs seemed to grow longer from day to day.

She began to put her arm into the sleeve of her bathrobe but it felt too heavy for the warm day and she laid it, instead, over the back of a chair.

She went to the open window. Leaning both elbows on the window sill, she looked out at the small corner of park at the end of the street. Yesterday the ground had been dark brown. Now there was lightest green where it had been so dark, a thin little coat of green.

It was very early. Across the way, the morning milk was delivered in a wood box divided into compartments the size of a bottle. It rested on the third step in front of Mr. Kunkel's store but Mr. Kunkel's door still had on its inadequately small lock, like a toy. Out of nowhere a gray-and-white kitten came at a brisk trot toward the wood box of milk.

It rubbed itself along the side of it, then raised itself to its hind legs and sniffed at the bottles and went back to rubbing. All round the box it went and at last made a try for the top edge of it. Again and again it scrambled up, only to slide off.

They hadn't been to the park since the time he had been on a long furlough two years ago. She had even gone on the carousel though the sign said For Children up to 12. But she had been small enough

then for the man not to notice. Well, not the carousel any more seeing how much she had grown since, though she would have loved to go round while the music sadly pumped out "O Sole Mio." If they bought peanuts they could feed the squirrels. They had sailed the boat that other time.

You had to send the boat along at a fast clip first. This breeze would have to stiffen a bit for sailing. The best was a spanking breeze. Right now it was too lazy and too gentle. She took a deep breath of the lazy and gentle air, smelling the newness and soft sweetness of the spring.

Whisper of wind in a narrow street—

Her lips shaped the words. Her own this time, not remembered from anywhere.

The kitten at last succeeded in clambering up and, nicely balanced, sat on the edge of the milk box, but no sooner was it settled than it took a big stretch,



arching its back and pretending to be a grown-up knowledgeable cat. Then it put out its forefeet daintily and jumped off. The tiny tail was white and the kitten held it up proudly like a flag.

Mr. Kunkel came walking down the street, hurrying toward his store. Every bit of Mr. Kunkel seemed to hurry. His arms and his head and his short legs. From all the way up where Julie was she could hear Mr. Kunkel shuffling his feet. Now all the magic quiet of the sleepy sunny street was broken. A man with an empty milk bottle walked along whistling and ran up the steps of Mr. Kunkel's store, and a baby began to cry, the sound billowing out from a near-by open window.

And now, too, the shutting-out trick she had taught herself would not work any longer. Now she began to hear that her mother was still talking in that early-morning way of hers just as she had been ever since Julie awoke. And she began to hear his sleepy answer, "But what's the hurry?" The words trickled through the wall.

That was the way it had to be, she used to think when she was smaller. Parents always talked to each other impatiently and frequently quarreled. Or were silent and did not talk to each other at all. Later on when she became friends with Anne and went often

to her house, she noticed with surprise that Anne's parents never seemed to be quarreling and were never angry or impatient with each other.

Why did her parents have to be so different from Anne's? She wished she belonged to Anne's family. Besides everything else, Anne had two brothers. Three children made a family the right size.

Mr. Kunkel reached down for the milk and the kitten took itself off to a thin stripe of sunshine on the pavement. Lovely place for a morning wash, kitten seemed to say, and licked its front paw and practiced face scrubbing, varying it with ear polishing.

"Julie! Julie, it's almost seven. Are you up?"

Her mother came to the doorway and stopped there, her eyes taking in the room and Julie. And Julie, straightening up, looked appraisingly at her, seeing the doorway as a frame for the picture of her mother. Her features were small, too, and her hair that was dark brown had lighter brown, almost gold, places in it and because she was thin she looked taller than she was.

"Been up for hours," Julie said, still at the window, "and good morning to you."

She was wearing the suit that was Julie's favorite, gray with a little bit of ruffled white here and there. But Julie noticed at once she would have odds and

ends to attend to. There was a thread on her mother's sleeve and a few not-caught-up hairs at the side of her neck. Julie came to her.

"Barefoot, Julie?" her mother said, "and your bathrobe on a chair instead of on you?" Her mother raised her eyes slightly to hers as she spoke to her, Julie was pleased to observe.

"You look nice, Mother, though you do dress by ear. Now just let me do this." The questions her mother had asked obviously needed no answers. Julie lifted off the thread and tucked away the loose ends of hair.

She thought of the first green of the park and wanted to show it to her mother but suspected she would say, "Let's not dawdle this morning," and instead began to dress as her mother went into the kitchen.

"It's almost warm enough for your new coat." Her mother raised her voice over the sounds of beginning breakfast. "Come in when you're ready."

"I'm coming. *Almost?* Does that mean I may?"

"You may."

"Mm."

Julie dressed quickly, putting on a thin black sweater and pushing up the sleeves of it and straightening her checked skirt, so the pleats hung right.

Then she tried a string of tiny white beads round her neck. Exactly the right outfit for rowing, even without the coat. But the coat would make it perfect. Absolutely perfect.

"Do come, Julie," her mother called from the kitchen. Then, "Jeff," she raised her voice again, "Jeff."

Julie was having trouble with the clasp. "In a moment, Mother."

"I'll not be able to wait for you if you don't come right away. And, Julie, get your father too." Her mother's before-breakfast voice, out of patience with them both.

Julie held the beads in her hand and went to her father's room. "Please fix this for me, Dad. And breakfast is ready."

"Be out in a minute, Julie, my girl," he said and turned to the wall.

"Well, don't forget about the rowing," she hurried to her mother in the small kitchen. "He's gone back to sleep. Here, Mother, please."

Julie sitting beside her mother on another kitchen stool managed a glass of too-cold milk in brief sips. "Let's see, I mustn't forget three things. Library book. Shopping list. Money. What about the shopping list?"

"Everything's on the table in the foyer. And the

money's with the list. It's a five-dollar bill so take good care of the change."

"Naturally." Her mother was always expecting her to lose or forget something, change or clothing or books. She was very careful, she considered. Very. She was about to remind her mother about last week, when she, Julie, had to go back for her mother twice, once for a package and once for gloves, when she remembered about the potatoes on Friday. Oh, well, no one is even approximately perfect, as her father said.

Her mother noticing her bracelet said, "Do you sleep with it on, Julie?"

"You might say so, Mother. Of all the birthday presents, I love it the best. And by the way one thing leads to another. I forgot to tell you but Viola's already asked me to her party. It's a long way off but she's already asked me. I've always thought it would be that way."

"What way have you always thought it would be?"

"Well, if you have parties you're invited to other parties. I've never had one before and never went to any. Except Anne's, of course. Now that I've had one they'll all be asking me, I'm pretty sure. There's Marcia Gordon in September too. In fact, I know of four possibilities."

"Four possibilities and one *bona fide* invitation. It's time to get a date book. What's more important, we'll have to begin saving pennies."

"Well, don't be worried, Mother. I know what you're thinking of. But I'll make the gifts. I know how to make aprons."

"Sure you're not planning wedding gifts for your friends? Let's see, footwarmers for their later years might be another thoughtful gift."

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of ordinary aprons. I'd make small fancy ones and have appliquéd flowers or vegetables for pockets."

"Vegetables for pockets. And pockets for vegetables. If you're going into the apron business there's a fine slogan for you."

Julie laughed. "Cabbages make nice pockets. Very easy to make."

"Well, the aprons do sound attractive, Julie. As you seem to be in the business and although it isn't my birthday, may I order a cabbage-pocket apron from you?"

"Yes, madam, one apron with cabbage pocket. The order is as good as filled."

While her mother rinsed the breakfast dishes and dried them, Julie went to her room to make her bed. When she returned she set a place for her father,

putting out a cup and saucer. She selected an orange from the row on the window sill, then put it back seeing a larger one and put that on a plate.

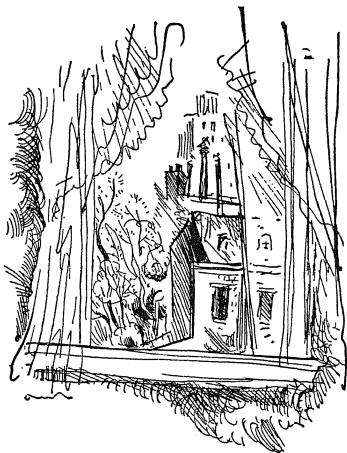
Julie glanced at the clock. "Not too late. Just about right I'd say." Carefully she took her new bright green topper from the closet and put it on. "How does it look, Mother?"

"Nice. I might say very nice but I haven't nearly enough time, so we'll have to let it go at nice." Her mother looked briefly into the mirror while putting on her hat.

Julie shut the door noiselessly behind them and they hurried down the three flights of carpeted stairs. On the street Julie slipped her arm through her mother's.

She looked forward to the morning walk to school. It was true that walks and talks with her father covered wider territory and were far more leisurely. Conversations with him were likely to begin with man-eating tigers and wander away to the songs of the South African veldt and range back to rowing techniques. Conversations with her mother on the way to school were inclined to be just a set of instructions.

"And you might shell the peas and get them ready for cooking. And the potatoes as usual, Julie," her



mother added. "Just a tiny flame, nothing like Friday."

Julie, in deepest embarrassment over the memory of the coal-like potatoes said, "I really cannot imagine how that happened."

"Turn them about every now and then. And that's about all. I'll attend to everything else when I get home. And try to get to the market before five when it gets so crowded."

"Nothing at Kunkel's?"

"Not unless you can't find it at the market. Oh, perhaps the bread at Kunkel's. We don't want him to forget us. And have a lovely day, Julie."

The bus was as far away as it took to get one complete set of instructions.

"And be sure to put the change inside your change purse and not have it loose in your pocket."

Julie nodded. If it was early Julie waited with her mother for the bus and then walked back but there was no time to spare this morning. Everyone on the way to school was hurrying.

"I'm afraid you may be late, Julie." Her mother kissed her quickly. "Good-by, dear. Have a nice day."

"You have a nice day, too, Mother." After she had gone a few steps, Julie turned round and waved to her mother, still waiting for the bus.



ANNE was running up the school steps and Julie, catching up with her, had the familiar feeling of being awkward and too large as she always had with anyone small and neatly made. After a few minutes she usually forgot about it but

now she felt she towered above Anne. Anne Harrison, it seemed to Julie, was a normal size for her age.

Inside the building Anne whispered loudly, "Your coat is beautiful."

"Thank you," Julie whispered in return. "We're going on the lake this afternoon. Rowing. My father is coming by for me. He wants to sail the little boat, too, but first we're going to row."

"You're lucky, Julie. Hap's sailboat is under lock and key. And he hardly ever uses it any more himself. He has, on past occasions, actually let me look at it, however," Anne added with fine sarcasm and, still whispering, "I'm sure he'll never let Ruff have it. Hap is definitely the selfish type."

"I'm too old for sailboating or anything like it," Julie said.

Anne shook her head in emphatic disagreement as they walked into Mrs. Starkweather's classroom.

Mrs. Starkweather's classroom was sunny and warm. On the blackboard someone had written, "A preposition is never used to end a sentence with." Mrs. Starkweather murmured to herself, checking the attendance.

Julie glanced at her program. Music came next. Good, but all the same it was going to be a long day

waiting for 3:15 and the rowing. She arranged her pencils carefully inside the pencil compartment of her brief case. She remembered now that she had left the change purse with the five dollar bill in it inside her coat pocket and worried over it. It would have been safer right along with her, but there was no time now to get it before the gong.

Anne was signaling something to her and writing in the air. Julie, knowing from countless experiences that Anne was probably in need of a pencil, passed one to her via Marcia Gordon. The gong for the first period sounded.

In Miss Saunders' classroom the music was Scottish and Welsh and Old English. The music period was by all considered a time for relaxation and diversion and playing a game of opening mouths with no sound issuing forth. How long one could remain undiscovered was a subject for keenest rivalry. But Julie loved the music and loved to hear Miss Saunders sing it. She leafed through the flat wide book of ballads, hoping they would begin with "O Wèrt Thou in the Cauld Cauld Blast." And was delighted to hear Miss Saunders ask them to turn to it.

Though there was an air of anticipation and brightness in the music room, though all wore light

spring clothing, Julie with the open book before her felt only the blast of the wintry wind, the dreariness of the lea. It was Miss Saunders who stood on the lea that Julie imagined to end in a precipitous cliff with a thrashing sea below.

Miss Saunders' blue eyes were bright with alarm while the wind rose in a fury of storm and she was wearing the thin clothes she wore today with only a lavender shawl lightly thrown over her shoulders.

Galloping on horseback, a fearless young rider now swiftly approached, banishing danger. Bending low, he gathered her up beside him while he sang in deep stirring tones, "The brightest jewel in my crown wad be my queen, wad be my queen." Adding, "You, Miss Saunders, are my queen." But no doubt he would say, "Margaret."

"Now, then," Miss Saunders said, "let us all try for once to keep together. The first two lines only." Her voice led all the others, a sweet deep contralto.

The class sang, the boys' voices weak and hesitant. Julie, entranced by the vision of Miss Saunders riding away with her rescuer over the lea, raised her voice and after the class had sung its two lines, went bravely on alone

Or did Misfortune's bitter storms

stopping in confusion, while the class laughed loudly and long.

Miss Saunders said, "No, Julie, not solo but group singing is what we are doing today And by the way," she added, "see me for a moment at the end of the day."

"It isn't fair to keep you in," Anne said, when the music period was over, "just for a little mistake like that when it wasn't your fault and it was just because you were interested in the music and you have a date with your father. Why don't you tell her?"

It really wasn't fair, Julie felt, but there was no time to tell Miss Saunders about meeting her father and if she immediately left Mrs. Starkweather's room and ran upstairs and told Miss Saunders, perhaps she'd let her off this afternoon and let her make it up tomorrow. She would not let it spoil her day for her, under any circumstances, and Julie hummed the music of "O Wert Thou in the Cauld Cauld Blast," thinking of the words at the end as having a particular and personal meaning for Miss Saunders.

* * *

How close to 3:15 now? she wondered, back in Mrs. Starkweather's room for Social Studies at the end of the day. She looked out of the window and watched the tiny clouds like little woolly lambs scudding across the sky. Whose kitten was that, anyway, in front of Kunkel's store? If no one wanted it,

perhaps she could take it home. Of course Mother would say no. She saw that the lamb-clouds were misbehaving and going in different directions. The light wind was chasing them along and she remembered her line of the early morning,

Whisper of wind in a narrow street—

now she thought of another to follow it,

Who can hear its secret complete?

The third followed by itself,

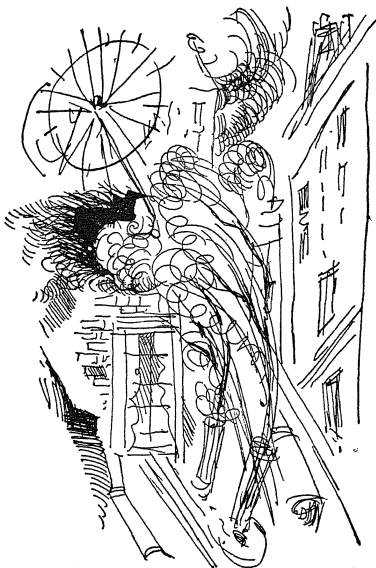
Who can remember that April is fleet?

Where there had been clouds a moment ago there was a patch of deepest blue.

Mrs. Starkweather stopped talking. There was a minute's heavily charged silence and Mrs. Starkweather said, "Perhaps Julie can tell us." But Julie had heard every word Mrs. Starkweather had said. She had not quite been able to shut out Mrs. Starkweather's voice just as she could never quite shut out the sound of *their* voices in the morning.

"Lapland extends north from the 64th latitude," said Julie, "from Finland and Sweden across Siberia to a point opposite Archangel on the White Sea."

"So it does," said Mrs. Starkweather. "We all thought you weren't listening. In future, please do not look out of the window no matter how fascinating the view is." And as everyone at once turned to



see the view that had so fascinated Julie, Mrs. Starkweather had to raise her voice which was already raised somewhat and say crossly, "Please, class, attention!"

* * *

She planned to tell her, "I'm very sorry, Miss Saunders, about this morning, but I didn't intentionally sing out. I thought we were going on with the whole song and so I sang the next line." But when she came to Miss Saunders' classroom, Miss Saunders was so pleased to see her and greeted her so warmly she forgot the speech she had prepared for her.

"There you are, Julie. I found this at home and I do believe you can do it beautifully at the June Song Festival. Will you try? Take it along with you. Have you a piano at home?"

"Oh, yes. I'd very much like to, Miss Saunders."

It was a double sheet of music frayed a bit at the corners and the title was "Greensleeves." Julie could almost follow the line of the melody at once.

"Now I'll have to hurry along," Miss Saunders said, "so I'm sorry to say we cannot go over it now, but you won't find it a bit difficult, I know. It is very nice for your voice." Miss Saunders was putting on her hat and there was a powdery sweet smell of lavender in the air about her, as always. "Let me know when you can come for a few minutes one afternoon to go over it with me."

Julie slipped the sheet of music into her brief case. "I can come any afternoon. Tomorrow, if you like."

They were going out together. Miss Saunders was

tall, so Julie did not feel awkward with her. They walked out of the main doors and there at the corner her father stood waiting. Above all the crowd she saw him. He wore no hat and his hair that was only a shade less bright than her own caught sunny highlights.

"I see my father waiting for me," she said, and then regretted it the moment she had said it. The boathook was there under one arm and the sailboat, looking enormous, was under the other.

She saw his face break into a smile as he caught sight of her.

"Well, have a pleasant afternoon," Miss Saunders said and greeted Julie's father as she passed by. Miss Saunders had not seemed at all disturbed about the boat that she had plainly seen. Julie felt better.

She took the boathook from him but she could not help with the boat. Nevertheless, he did not seem to mind the weight and bulkiness of it.

"Now what's new and special today?" he said to her.

"My coat was much admired—" she began the day's news as they walked slowly to the park. Inside her pocket her fingers reassured themselves as they felt the change purse. She took it out and put it inside her brief case.

"My shopping money, five dollars. I worried



about that five dollar bill all day. I left it in my coat pocket.”

In some secret way, all the squirrels had heard about the bag of peanuts her father bought for them, for portly uncle- and aunt-squirrels and young slim squirrels came out to welcome them. On a wide lawn they set down the boat and hook, her brief case, and her coat that she took off and carefully folded.

“Look at this,” said her father, and put a nut in the crook of his elbow. A young adventure-seeking squirrel hopped up, took the nut delicately, and scurried away. Another bravely settled himself in front of them, rounding his tiny paws like hands and placing them on his chest.

““What about me?” says he. And what’s more I’ve got the answer.” He gave the squirrel a peanut. “Shall we go along to the pond?”

She had been waiting all day to go rowing but the little tame creatures were so hungry and seemed so

dependent upon their kindness she wanted to stay on, feeding them and watching them, intent and grave, shining black button eyes glistening. What about me? And me? And me? They were all putting their little hands up to their chests.

He stood up and looked all around him and up at the sky. "It's sure enough spring. If you listen sharp, Julie, on a day like this you can hear the grass grow." He whistled a phrase and repeated it. "Like it, Julie, my girl?" He was pleased with it. And since he was pleased, Julie was also. "Now, listen again." He had some words for the tune,

I hear the green grass growing, I do.

Do you?

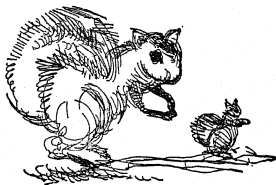
I do, chirped the squirrels.

Do you?

I do, chirped the birds.

Do you?

"It'll go something like that."



Julie looked at him, seriously weighing the tune and the words. It was better than many a radio tune, she decided. A plan took form in her mind, was abandoned in the same instant, and at once returned and took hold of her.

"I've just thought of something," Julie said, listening to her plan meet the light of day. "Suppose you write it tonight, Dad, and finish it. Then have somebody buy it. Perhaps R. R. Winterich and Company. No, because then Mother would see you coming into the office. But some other music publisher would certainly buy it. Then after it's bought, tell Mother about it. She'd be so surprised, wouldn't she? And pleased. Goodness, she'd be pleased. Isn't that an idea?"

"It's an idea all right." He looked at her in an odd way and laughed shortly, and said, as though he were talking to someone his own age, "I couldn't sell it yet. I haven't got anything yet to sell."

"Of course not now, but when you finish it. And across it would be printed, 'Words and Music by Jeffrey Forrest.' Can't you just see how it would look?"

"It isn't as easy as all that. I'm not sure I can get just the right middle and end. You know a song's more than a beginning."

"Of course it is," Julie said, "but it's almost enough already."

"I'm a bit rusty," he said. "All that Army stuff takes your mind off these things."

"I don't see how you found any time at all for music," she said, "with all the other things going on in a war."

"You do get in the habit of having everything arranged for you. No planning of your own and no working on something off by yourself. I've lost the know-how, I guess."

"It's such a good beginning."

"Well, sir, if you say so, I'll get right on it, boss," he said, cheerful again. "Just let me put it down." He took a pad out of his pocket and made some notes and whistled his tune again, trying it out.

She nodded. "I like it. Oh, look," she said, suddenly remembering, and searched in her brief case, bringing out the music that Miss Saunders had given her, "I'm to learn this for the Song Festival. It's next June."

He glanced at it and hummed it for her. "Great old tune," he said. "Particularly good with string accompaniment. Come on now."

She stood still, her plan persisting against all opposition, the beauty of it overwhelming her, making

everything else seem unimportant. "If you want to, Dad, I don't mind a bit if we skip the rowing and go home. We could go over 'Greensleeves' together and then you could go on with your song. Some other day would be just as good for rowing, when we haven't so much on our minds."

"All right, let's skip the rowing. But let's have a bit of fun with the sailboat. Then we'll get back early and have had a sail too."

They picked up their things and took to the by-paths. Julie found a violet under new-leafed barberry, and everywhere were thick buds of sycamore and ash at the very instant of bursting open. All around them were the robins, very busy and noisy. They walked twice round the pond before he found exactly the right place for the launching.

"Here goes," he said and, kneeling, set the boat gently into the water, sending it out with the boat-hook. A ripple of wind caught the sails and it was off. It kept its keel better and was as handsome as any boat on the pond. It was going to the very center before it veered, then was coming in. There were boys as big as she launching boats, she noticed, and another man, but no girls of her age though there were some little ones across the pond.

"It's a wonderful boat, Dad, but if we're—"

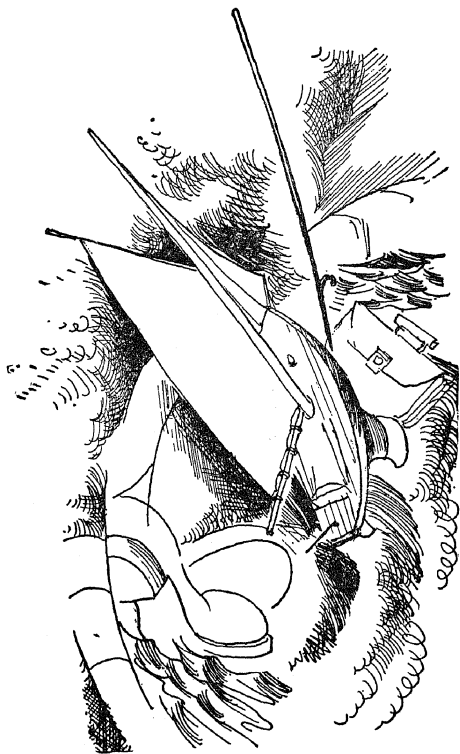
"Try launching it yourself," he said, and brought it in for her.

It would please him, she felt, to show him she hadn't forgotten how to sail the boat he had built for her so long ago. She kneeled and sent it out and it caught the breeze and sailed off. He stood watching beside her and Julie said, "If we're to get any music in, we'll have to leave about now. I've some things to buy, a whole list of them, and I must get our supper going."

"Well, I guess you can have one more sail, anyway. Just a minute, Julie, my girl," he said. A short distance away a thoroughly inexperienced sailor of three or four was staggering under the great weight of a blue boat with blue sails. Her father patiently showed him that not the sails but the boat must be set in the water.

Her boat now described a pretty circle and was so close to shore she could easily lean over for it but, as she did, a little teasing breeze sent it away from her hand. She leaned a bit farther, and quicker than she knew, the foot nearest the pond slipped on a wet place. Into the pond plunged one foot and the other right after it. She grasped the rounded ledge and held tightly to it, trying to pull herself up.

"Now how in Heaven's name did that happen?"



Her father with two long strides was beside her, lifting her out.

She could not even say. Both feet were wet through and when she took a step she was squelching water.

"Shall we get off your shoes and stockings?"

"They'd never dry."

"Well then, let's get going." He hastily collected the boat and hook and took up her brief case and her coat that she had left on a bench near by. She looked down at her soaked feet and legs and tried hard not to cry. It was something at least, she consoled herself meagerly, that she had had the luck to leave off her new coat. Her feet were cold as ice and were heavy to drag along. It seemed hours before they reached the market and shopped and got home.

* * *

On a kitchen stool Julie sat shelling peas. Every few minutes she glanced at the clock. Her shoes were taking an unexpectedly long time to dry. Meanwhile the warmth crept up about her feet and took the chill from them. But she was more and more ashamed of her clumsiness. Perfectly ridiculous for a girl in her second year at high school, taller than her mother, old enough to prepare supper for a family, to fall into the boat pond while the littlest ones kept their balance.

Dad looked into the kitchen. "Came pretty near drowning in a fishbowl, didn't you?" he said, then began to help her with the peas. He had lighted the stove and put her shoes under it to dry them out. He stooped and felt them and shook his head over them, but he wasn't so upset about the whole thing as he had been on the way home, she thought with relief.

She had begun to think again of "The Green Grass Growing." As though it were the auditorium period at school and a slide were thrown up and enlarged on the screen with every detail of the picture bold and clear, she now saw exactly what would happen. Because of "The Green Grass Growing," he would at last be famous. Everybody, everywhere, would be singing it. You could scarcely turn to a station on the radio without hearing it. Mother would be delighted. Perhaps "The Green Grass Growing" would mean the end of all the quarreling. It would, almost certainly. It would change everything. Everything.

"Are you going to work out 'The Green Grass Growing'?" she asked confidently, now that its future was so assured and just to bring the conversation round to this pleasant subject once more.

He dropped a handful of peas noisily into the pan and pulled at her ear and went into the other room and played on the piano the snatch of tune he had

whistled for her in the park. He played it twice and stopped, then played it again more slowly, and struck some discordant notes at the end and one final modern chord. After a while he came back to the kitchen.

"Can't make anything out of it," he said. "I guess it wasn't much good to begin with."

"I like it," she said stubbornly, her hopes dying hard and unwillingly.

"By the way, Julie, my girl," he said, "are you going to tell Mother about this—this little spill you had?"

"She'll surely notice. Unless I put on my shoes."

"They're fairly dry now," he said.

She put on dry stockings first, then her shoes, but it took a long time to get into them because they had become so stiff and tight. Even the shoehorn wasn't much help.

She turned the flame low under the potatoes and set the table, lifting her feet gingerly because her toes were cramped. At five minutes past six there was the sound of a key in the lock and there was her mother, looking somewhat windblown with her hat perched too far back on her head.

"Hello, everyone. What kind of day was it?"

"Hello," Julie called back, "a wonderful day,"

adding quickly, "the potatoes are just right, Mother, and there's the change, and the peas are in the pan. You promised to look in the mirror before leaving the office, and I know you didn't."

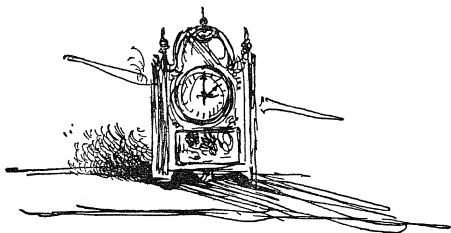
"Well, I'm in such a great hurry to get home and besides the crowds in the train undo all the fixing anyway."

"But you didn't tonight, did you?"

"Not tonight," her mother admitted. "Do I look such a fright?"

"No," Julie said honestly, "you don't at all." All the same she had managed to steer the conversation away from the kind of day it had been.

Her father in the next room was turning up the radio and her mother was busy broiling chops. Julie was gratefully getting out of her tight damp shoes and her clothes, and getting into the steaming bathtub. She smelled the good food smells as she stretched out happily. Their house was a ship. And who could navigate so skilfully as her mother? She was Captain. Dad and she were only First Mates. Could a ship have two? No, one of them would have to be Second Mate. Every day at six the Captain took over the watch and studied the log but today the Second Mate had fallen overboard in a highly irregular manner. And no entry of it on the log either.



JULIE heard the clock strike two. A hasty little double-sound. If it was two at night it meant she had a long sleep ahead till morning, but if it was two in the afternoon it meant she had slept through the night and almost all of tomorrow. Today or tomorrow, which was it? If she opened her eyes she'd know just by seeing whether it was dark or light, but under her eyelids her eyes ached. She did not want to open them for a little while longer.

A faraway roaring sound began in her ears and faded and roared again. If it was tomorrow at two she'd have to have an absent note for Mrs. Starkweather. Not that she minded bringing it. Now at high school she was not a bit afraid of her teachers but when she had been little she'd been in mortal fear of them all. Especially Miss Pellew. She wondered if she met Miss Pellew one day, would Miss Pellew remember her, Julie.

With a great effort she opened her eyes and saw that the room was in darkness. It was not the afternoon, then, but the middle of the night, and she was very hot. Oddly, her feet were icy cold, colder even than when she had been walking home from the pond. Her legs began to shiver under the blanket and she drew up her knees nearly to her chin. But they were just as heavy to draw up now as they had been walking home.

The worst of it was she had not told her mother about getting her feet wet. But, her mother would say, why wasn't I told about this at once. I could have done something. She tried to find an answer to make to her mother after her mother would say that and could not think of one and fell asleep again.

Once more the hasty little bell sound—one, two, three, four, five, six. Almost time to get up. She tried

hard to lift herself up but her body refused. Absolutely.

Much later, her mother was sitting beside the bed, chin cupped in one hand, looking as if she had been studying Julie for a long time. In the soft shaded lamplight she looked very pretty. It was nice to see her in her long dressing gown. It was an old worn one with threadbare places at the elbows and around the wrists but Julie loved the nubby fabric and its sea green color.

Outside the window was grayness. She could hear the rain slanting against the panes and the foghorns echoing each other.

"Don't you feel well, Julie?"

"Not very well. I'm so thirsty and hot. The funny thing is, my feet are cold."

"I'll bring some water."

Because her throat hurt, Julie drank the cold water in gulps.

"It's early, isn't it, Mother?"

"Just seven."

"How did you know I wasn't feeling well?"

"I looked in on you just before I went to bed. You were rather flushed and your head felt hot. Then I came in again during the night and first thing in the morning. Does something hurt?"



"Not a thing hurts—except my throat when I swallow. It's just a cold, don't you think?"

"Oh, yes, it's a cold. Wait before you doze off again. I want you to take something." She stood up.

"I wish—" Julie began.

"What do you wish, Julie?"

It was hard to put into words. What did she wish? Most of all to see her mother this way every morning, this way instead of in her office clothes, instead of impatiently hurrying her, Julie, off. And hurrying away herself. This morning, making it even more restful and quiet, there were no angry words coming through the wall.

Julie said, "I guess what I wish most is that you'd stay at home, Mother, all the time."

"Do you, Julie? You'd soon be tired of having me about all the time, you know, keeping a watchful eye on you. Besides I'm at home Sundays with you, and half days Saturdays, and did you forget about every evening?"

Julie leaned on a wobbly elbow. "I mean after school, every day, so when I come back you'll be here waiting."

Her mother sat down again, this time beside her on the edge of the bed. "I could give you any number of reasons, Julie, that would explain why that isn't a good idea for us. I think you know the most important one."

Yes, of course she knew. She had wished for something just as anyone wishes for an impossible thing. A figure of speech, Miss Willoughby would call it.

"And, Julie, I often think of how many children

have lost one or both parents because of the war. We may not see each other very much, it's true, but at least we have each other. At least our family is intact, now that it's all over. And sometimes, especially when we're ill, we begin to feel very sorry for ourselves. That's all it is, Julie. And of course I'll stay with you until you're well."

Julie sighed gratefully. Her mother hadn't said, you're so big now, I'm surprised to hear you say—this or that or whatever it was Julie had said, which lately had seemed to be the answer to almost everything.

But that was true about the war. She had often thought of it herself. Greg Booker's father had been first reported missing, then, a long time later, dead. And his mother had had to take Greg and his sister away from New York and back to the West where her home had been. Greg who had always been cheerful and never quite given up hope was very quiet and serious the day he had come in to say good-by to his friends. Yes, the war was over and they were safe together.

All the same it wasn't only when she was sick that she wanted her mother. And if only her head didn't ache so.

Her mother came in with a tray full of things, a hot

water bag, a glass of orange juice and another of cold water, and a box of paper handkerchiefs.

"Now, Julie, I'm not a good nurse so I hope you won't embarrass me by making me work at something I've no talent for. Balancing trays, for instance." Her mother set down the crowded tray and handed her the orange juice.

Julie judged that her mother had decided she was not very sick and said obligingly, "I do feel a little better now," but her throat hurt drinking the juice and it seemed warm and tasteless. It was much more peaceful just to be lying down. She turned her head away and closed her eyes.

Her mother began to put shoe trees into her shoes. She heard the clicking sound of them against each other and too late remembered. If she had only thought to put the shoe trees in herself. Now her mother would know and now Dad would be really upset.

"But what's happened to your shoes, Julie? They're wet through, and stiff."

"They got pretty wet," she said.

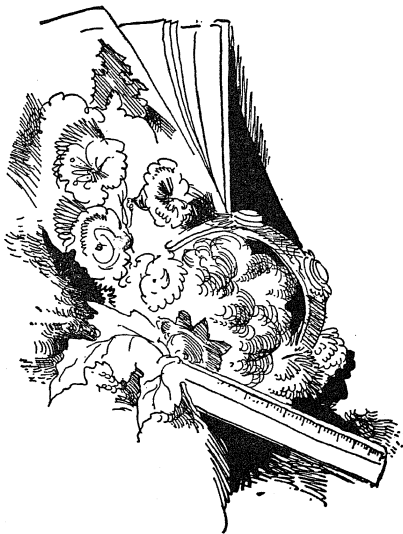
"But it didn't rain yesterday too. Never mind, I think I can guess. Tell me about it another time. Sleep now."

Perversely, when her mother asked her to sleep

she could not. She shut her eyes and tried hard but behind her closed lids it was as though a basket had been upset, a wide deep basket that had held all sorts of things, old, almost forgotten things, and new ones too. A thin silver band set with three turquoise stones, Anne's birthday present. It came from Mexico. You could see the tiny letters inside the band. Turquoise was a wonderful color. . . . A large square book of garden flowers. The flowers talked to each other in rhyme. *I love a wall said the hollyhock tall*. Afterward she had pressed real flowers in its pages. . . . A boll of cotton someone—who could it have been?—had sent her in a cubical cardboard box. Regards from Dixie, it said. . . . And a ruler with a bent metal edge.

About the ruler. Miss Pellew stood outside her classroom door waiting until all the children of the Second Grade had passed by on their way home. As she, Julie, went by, she felt the pin on her shoulder scratch Miss Pellew. Miss Pellew quickly clapped her hands together several times and as Julie turned round, she held one hand with the other and said loudly, "Come back here at once." Julie came back, knowing what had happened and frightened, frightened into speechlessness.

She saw that from the long scratch the blood was beginning to make a thin uneven line.



“Look!” said Miss Pellew holding out her small hand. But Julie was already looking. Miss Pellew’s hand was pink and soft, and the places where knuckles were on other people’s hands were tiny dimples on Miss Pellew’s hand. And across the back of the pink soft hand was the thin bleeding scratch.

Miss Pellew said nothing more, standing very still with her hand outstretched, and just looking at Julie. But Julie was too terror-stricken even to say, I'm sorry, Miss Pellew. Then Miss Pellew's eyes lighted on Julie's ruler.

"This," said Miss Pellew, "is what did it." And she lifted it out from the notebook in which Julie had carefully placed it. The ruler had a metal edge and a little end of it was loose and bent. Miss Pellew tugged at the little loose end and the whole metal strip easily came out of the ruler. Then she returned the ruler without its edge to her.

"Do you realize," she said, "that your ruler might give someone blood poisoning?"

But though she had known that it was the pin in the shoulder of her dress and not the ruler that had scratched Miss Pellew, she had not corrected her, even though Miss Pellew had utterly ruined the ruler her father had given her.

If Miss Pellew had seen it was the pin she might have said, How untidy and slipshod. Why is there no button sewed here? She could never begin to tell Miss Pellew why. To tell her she would have had to say, My mother is too busy. She is away all day and has hardly any time for sewing and I don't know how to use a needle. I've tried but it pushes into my

finger. That long story would have made Miss Pellew angrier even than she was. She had stood there looking at the hand then down at her shoes, saying nothing at all.

She opened her eyes. "I suppose I caught cold because my feet got wet, don't you think?"

"It wouldn't surprise me in the least. Did you fall into the lake?"

"No, Mother."

"No?"

"No," said Julie, hoping for mercy, "it was only the boat pond."

"It was just as wet, I imagine," her mother said, but there was no indulgence in her voice. "Did you hurt yourself, too?"

"No, not at all. First one foot slipped and before I knew it both feet were in the water." She waited to hear her mother say she had been careless, very careless for someone of her age. Instead her mother sat back and said nothing.

Julie looked out of the window seeing the rain make swift little paths of wetness on the panes. Sometimes her mother was hard to understand. When she was fully prepared for a scolding her mother would say not a word and at other times when she had thought she had said or done exactly the right thing her

mother would catch her up on something. Like the perfectly innocent remark about wishing her mother were at home all the time.

"Is there something you want, Julie? How do your feet feel?"

"Snug and warm, now. I wonder if you'd look out of the window and see if there is a kitten near Mr. Kunkel's store. There was a gray-and-white one there yesterday. It may be out there in the rain."

Her mother went to the window and strained to see through the rain-washed glass. "I don't see anything in front of Kunkel's. Just shiny wet sidewalk. He must have it inside. Anyway, kittens are much too intelligent to sit out in the rain."

"I guess so." Especially as this one had the good sense to suspect there was milk in sealed-up milk bottles.

In spite of the downpour, an organ-grinder began creakily to play "Pop Goes the Weasel." It was nice to listen to and made up in a small way for having a sore throat. Her mother went into the kitchen and Julie could hear her moving about, treading quietly and setting things gently down instead of rattling them as she did mornings when they were hurrying through breakfast.

Her father came in and stood leaning against the wall facing her. "Feeling better, Julie, my girl?"

"Much better now." She sat up and he fixed her pillow so she could comfortably keep on sitting up. The roaring sound had entirely gone out of her ears. "Dad," she said, half-whispering, "Mother saw my shoes and guessed right, so I had to admit I fell in."

He began to whistle softly along with "Pop Goes the Weasel" that the organ-grinder was playing over and over.

"Anything new and special?" she asked after a minute. It was his phrase and covered all the questions about what she was up to at school and writing and music and even the news about Anne. She wondered if he'd understand she was asking about the song and whether he'd changed his mind about it after all and would go on with it. Sometimes she



thought of a line for a poem days after she'd begun it.

He shook his head. "About the only thing that's new around here is a case of sore throat."

"I suppose you'll never take me to the lake or anywhere near water."

"Well, I don't know," he said. His thoughts were elsewhere, she could tell, and perhaps he was angry for the way it had come out with Mother knowing about the ducking. All at once it occurred to her he had looked forward to sailing his boat and she had spoiled his afternoon as well as her own. The roaring had come back into her ears and her head throbbed. It would be nice if her father were a little sorry for her.

"Get well fast, Julie," he said, bringing his attention back to her, "I'll be looking forward to the rowing lesson. You know you did me out of that." He wasn't angry with her. He wasn't in the slightest angry with her and what was more he had given her as good as a promise to go rowing when she was well again. And that would be soon. Everything was right again.

"As fast as possible," she said, swallowing cautiously to see how bad the pain was. Still pretty bad. But tomorrow it would be better. It would simply have to be better.



EVEN allowing for mishaps, school day afternoons with her father were the best of all, but next best were the afternoons Julie spent with Anne Harrison. Julie went home with Anne the afternoon of her first day back at school. There were two days

of school work to make up after her boat-pond ducking. Anne could help her catch up.

Anne's shoes were new black patent leather sandals on platforms. Because Julie was unable to wear her stiffly dried leather oxfords, she was wearing last year's summer loafers. Julie's heels were so low and Anne's platforms so high there was hardly any difference today in their height. It made Julie feel less stretched-out than usual, although when walking into the assembly in the morning she had glanced down at her loafers and been uncomfortably aware of their run-down appearance.

Anne, too, was pleased at the greater equality and viewed the subject from several angles.

"Ruff is actually taller than I am," she said with undisguised resentment. "The men in my family are tall and the women little."

"Well, that's certainly better than the other way round," Julie said.

"And it has nothing whatever to do with eating which my mother kept telling me for years. I eat just the same things that the boys eat. I can see, though, that I'll soon have no authority over Ruff at all. He's four years younger than I am and already inches taller, though he does have a long neck which I wouldn't want, would you?"

"No, sir," Julie said. "And as for having authority, I'd say your mother does very well with the boys, Anne, and she's not so tall."

"Mothers are not part of the problem. Anyway I wish I were as tall as you, Julie, and I'd give anything for your hair."

"That's funny. I was just thinking how nice yours is, curling under just where you want it to, instead of its having to be braided to keep it in some kind of order. Your hair is like my mother's. It even has the same golden places in it. And about being tall, you've no idea how uncomfortable I feel sometimes. Falling into the boat pond is one example," she remembered ruefully.

"Well, anybody would. Any size."

The Harrisons lived several blocks farther from school than Julie on a street off the East River in the sixties. The houses here were all of red brick and on both sides of the street were exactly alike. Each had a long stone flight of stairs in front and a square of garden at the back. To Julie this block of houses represented the far reaches of grandeur.

As they left the immediate neighborhood of the school, they began to walk east along quiet streets planted long years ago with sycamores that had, in spite of city stone and soot, become deep-rooted and

tall. Almost all the leaves had pushed out overnight in young fresh green.

"I wish I could get my bicycle greased," Anne said. "Ruff positively refuses to do it. I know how to handle him, though. Just wait until supper. The way to get Ruff to do anything," she explained, "is to tell him not to. And if I'd remembered that little fact sooner, I could have been using the bike for days to and from school and we could have been taking turns on it this very minute."

"Well, I'm a bit big to get going on your bike. Especially as I haven't been on it since last fall and I seem to have grown very long legs since."

"You'll pick it right up again," Anne assured Julie. "But we'll wait until Ruff greases it. And I know just how to make him." Anne sounded more and more threatening. "I've been reading up on Child Psychology. What are *you* going to do, Julie?" Anne suddenly dropped the subject of Ruff.

The gentle wind in the thin-leaved trees and the soft sunlit air were lulling Julie into something that resembled sleepwalking. She had been listening to Anne, and making half-awake answers to her but, at the same time, listening to the twittering of the sparrows in the treetops and the drowsy sound of metal wheels crossing trolley tracks back on Third Avenue.

"Do?" She roused herself from her sleepwalking.

"For a career, I mean."

A career? She had thought of it only infrequently and as something she would meet as a problem a hundred years from now. Already Julie knew, however, that Anne was going to be a Child Psychologist and was going to be addressed as Dr. Harrison. Anne had long ago planned every detail.

"It's easy enough to make a guess, of course," Anne went on. "Miss Saunders is always praising your voice and your singing. You'll probably be an opera singer. But you ought to start soon. Studying for it, I mean. Or maybe a poet." She glanced sideways at Julie trying these professions on her as one would measure her with the eye for a suit.

Julie was thinking there were secret places you did not talk about for one reason or another. Even to Anne.

She remembered the first half of the first year at high school and the poem she had written that began *Distant vales of misty green*. She had been very shy then. Especially shy about showing her poems to anyone. At last she had shown it to Anne. Anne had urged her to let Miss Willoughby of the English Department see it, and when she had refused Anne had pretended to borrow it and had laid it then on Miss Willoughby's desk.

Miss Willoughby had asked if anyone in that class had written it for it had very fine feeling. But Julie had not spoken up, sitting there and listening to the intimate words that sounded so strange now, read by Miss Willoughby. Whoever looked at her would have known in an instant who had written it. And of course Miss Willoughby was looking straight at her. She had been sorry for a long time she had ever shown her poem to Anne.

There were many secret places in her life, she thought, and in that one way she was very different from Anne. Anne had no secret, ashamed places in her life, she was certain. Their angry early-morning voices, for instance. And the shutting-out trick. Or even admitting to Anne that she wasn't interested in a career. When she thought of the word career Julie at once thought of her mother's office.

In all the years that her mother had worked at R. R. Winterich and Company, music publishers, Julie had only once been to her office. She had seen the files and books and huge desks, the partitioned-off tiny offices like the cells of a beehive and she had heard the noise of typewriters clicking like so many small businesslike guns.

Perhaps she could tell Anne who so generously confided in her about one secret place, after all.

"All the people at school," she began, wondering how it was going to sound to Anne, "talk about their plans for the future just as you do, Anne, but what would you say if I told you I haven't a single plan. Not one.

"I suppose you'll call me old-fashioned but when I think of what I'll be doing later on, years later of course, I see myself living in a house a little like yours, not so large naturally, and having a kind husband and three children, two boys and a girl." She felt all the blood quickly rush into her face and she did not look at Anne. It did not sound at all so vague as her thoughts about her future. It seemed almost as definite a program as Anne's.

But Anne saw nothing odd about it. "Well," said she, "if I ever do get married and I'm not at all sure I ever shall, I'd certainly hate to have boys."

It was funny, really, Julie thought in the midst of her surprise that Anne had taken her confession so calmly, it was very funny that Anne should decide to be a Child Psychologist and at the same time dislike boys so much, seeing that so many children were boys.

"Would you only have girls for patients, Anne? What does a Child Psychologist do, anyway?"

"Why, that's what I'm going to find out, of course.

Mainly it's understanding children's problems. For example, a girl with two brothers has a very hard time getting anything away from them and the Child Psychologist talks to the boys and shows them how wrong they are. That's just one example."

So Anne wasn't really going to punish boys for being boys as Julie had been suspecting all along but was simply going to try to even things out better. Julie nodded understandingly.

* * *

The Harrison house had eight rooms and became in Julie's eyes a spacious castle compared with their own small four room apartment. Julie's mother had been born in a farmhouse at Vernal Bank, a hamlet that lay overlooking the Hudson Valley in New York State. She scarcely mentioned it but once she had described it as a rambling farmhouse. When Julie thought of it she imagined it to be like the Harrison house if the Harrison house were set out in farm land.

Besides other numerous attributes, there was installed in the Harrison kitchen, and protected by a translucent red-edged cover, an astonishing possession of the Harrison family. When the red-edged cover was lifted off, there stood an unquestionable malted milk machine.

For days and weeks after Mr. Harrison had brought it home malted milks were daily, twice-daily and thrice-daily fare, and when Julie was introduced to it, although the wonder and beauty had worn off a little, it was still the very first thing Anne showed her at home.

Perhaps it splashed a bit more today than it should have and so put brown frothy freckles on both their faces but it whirred convincingly and at last produced a pair of malted milks of rare flavor.

"Let's go upstairs," Anne said. The sound of "upstairs" suggested so much more pleasantly involved a way of life than her own that on each visit Julie was newly impressed. They shut themselves off in a room the Harrisons called their study. In this remote hideaway with its furnishings of books and its smell of leather chairs Julie and Anne applied themselves to homework.

Subject for subject, Anne diligently went over the lessons Julie had missed. Julie made copious notes and in return Julie could help Anne with mathematics which was not Anne's strongest point by showing her how to solve an interest problem Anne should have learned the day before.

Because of the children, the Harrisons had supper at six. At five-thirty, by Anne's wrist watch, they were through with their lessons. Anne and Julie went

downstairs just as Hap came in carrying his violin case. Mrs. Harrison having come in earlier was setting the table for supper. Mrs. Harrison's hair was white but her face was unlined and her skin as clear as Anne's.

She greeted Julie warmly. "Are you entirely well, Julie? It's nice to see you here again."

"I love to come," Julie said. She felt it was like coming to a party to have supper with the Harrisons. There seemed to be so many of them though even with herself the table was set for only six. But six is twice as many as three, she thought, remembering their own small dinner table at home.

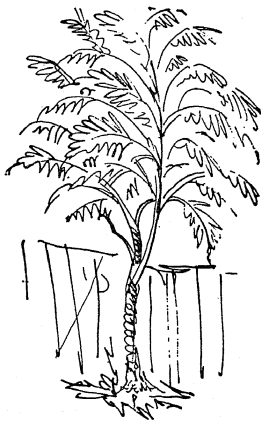
Outside the window of the dining room the backyard ailanthus was visible, the leaves thick enough to cast a greenish light into the room. Already it seemed to be summer.

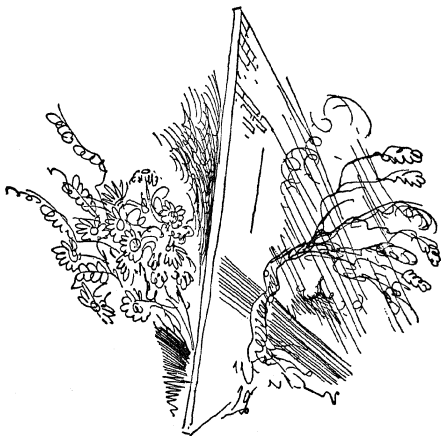
Mrs. Harrison's glance followed Julie's out of the window.

"When Hap was little," she said, "we brought him along to look at this house. After we had gone over everything very carefully, we thought, we were on our way home but we were still uncertain. We kept comparing this house with another we'd seen. Hap was thinking it over too, it seemed, because he turned to me and said, very seriously, 'If we buy

this house we'll own a tree too.' All of us felt it was a very good, decisive reason for choosing this house rather than the other, which had no tree. So that is how we came to own a tree."

Mr. Harrison, calling out a rousing greeting to his family from the door, came in with packages and confided something to Mrs. Harrison who immediately put one of the packages into the refrigerator.





THE places for Julie and Anne were as usual beside each other at the table, and opposite Julie was Hap's place, but no Ruff had appeared as yet.

From upstairs there suddenly came an agonized cry of pain, then a prolonged groan. Following it,

there was an uneasy silence, and finally the thud of a heavy body falling. Julie sitting on the arm of a chair jumped to her feet.

"Did—did you hear that?" she asked of Mr. and Mrs. Harrison. She looked from one to the other but each of them was busy with a task of supper preparation. No one else had apparently heard. "I heard a sound as if someone were hurt and had fallen," she managed to say.

"Pay no attention, Julie," Mr. Harrison abstractedly told her, "Ruff has most probably been done away with in one horrible way or another." He was looking for a bottle opener, he added, for the ginger ale, and it was here only last night. Mrs. Harrison joined in a lengthy search in the buffet drawer.

Hap, bringing in glasses, noticed Julie's genuine fright.

"Relax, Julie. Ruff plays games up there that end mostly with getting shot and more or less killed. He'll be down in a minute."

"Better get him, Hap. Will you?" Mrs. Harrison was bringing a large covered dish to the table. From all around the cover curls of vapor were fragrantly escaping. Mr. Harrison at last found the opener and seated himself. Ruff, neatly brushed, and looking far from done away with, appeared from upstairs, with Hap closely following.

"Something around here smells like something I like," Ruff stated flatly.

Mr. Harrison briskly and generously helped everyone to meat loaf and vegetables and, as he served each, took the opportunity of demanding to be told the longest word in the English language. As this was intended for Ruff and as everyone was aware of it and therefore pretended unrelieved ignorance, it gave Ruff great pleasure to answer as promptly as possible, "antidisestablishmentarianism," offering to spell it as well.

"Ruff, I can see, will be the scholar of the family," his father predicted.

"If he isn't a victim of gang warfare first," Hap cheerfully contributed.

Ruff, unable to resist the suggestion, began to slump lifelessly from his chair when he caught his father's eye and straightened up.

"Now that Ruff's future is taken care of," Hap said, "I hope there won't be any objections to one tiller of the soil in the family."

"You, Hap?" his mother asked.

"What's this?" Mr. Harrison inquired, while Ruff muttered, "A toiler of the sill?"

"I'd like to use next summer vacation, Father, to prepare for an agriculture course at college. They're doing amazing things in agricultural research. Did

you know that cotton can be grown colored? I've heard of its being grown in every shade right in the boll."

"Haven't heard a thing about it. What about your own vacation, Hap?" But they could all see Mr. Harrison was pleased with Hap's enthusiasm.

"If they'd let me come down for the summer to the Maryland research station, working there would be plenty of vacation for me."

"What is it about agriculture that attracts you?"

Mrs. Harrison said, "Oh, Hap has always loved the woods and all outdoors."

"I'm a country person, I guess, just as Mother says. No one seems to find it unusual for a farm boy to come to the city in search of a career. In fact it's expected. But when a city boy becomes interested in agriculture, it strikes people funny most of the time."

"Not at all," his mother said. "I don't find it funny. I think it's fine."

"Had you thought that if we had a farm of our own," Hap quickly warmed to his subject, "we'd be able to put some of the new experiments to work? Even make some of our own."

"As for me," Mr. Harrison said, "I've always wanted a farm. Let's see how you get along. We'll talk about a farm again later on."

"Will you let me go then, that is, if they'll have

me?" Hap looked from his mother to his father.

"We won't put obstacles in your way," he said.

His mother nodded and smiled at him, giving him in a look all her consent and blessings, besides.

Anne now brought up casually the subject of bicycles in general and hers in particular and noted the fact that greasing was not essential in most cases.

"If you hadn't left it out in the rain it wouldn't have rusted out so," remarked Ruff, likewise casually.

"Well," said Anne, with a studied air of indifference, "I'd just as soon let it get worn-looking. There've been cases of stolen bicycles, I hear, when they look too new and shiny. So please don't grease it, Ruff, in case you've been thinking about it."

"Don't worry," said Ruff, "I won't."

"I'm going to grease my own one of these days," Hap said in generous mood, "and I'll do yours, too, Anne. Don't try to work on Ruff. It looks as if Ruff is aware of your famous theory. Also it looks as if it stopped working quite a while back."

All the wind went out of Anne's psychological sails. "Well, many grateful thanks," she said, looking extremely ungrateful.

Mr. and Mrs. Harrison exchanged clear telegraphic symbols in the form of glances, and Mrs.

Harrison said, "Anne, dear, would you be good enough to get our dessert for us? There's a package in the freezer compartment and I'm sure you'll know what to do with it."

"Ice cream?" asked Ruff pleasantly. "Hurry along, Anne."

Anne walked out to the kitchen with dignity, pointedly disregarding the boys. Coming back with the ice cream in a bowl on a tray she was visibly startled to hear Hap say to Ruff, "Have a look at my sailboat, Ruff. I don't think I'll be sailing it again. It's in first-class shape. Take it down to the pond and have a try."

Ruff was suspicious. "Seems to me it's locked up."

"Oh, no. I put it out on the bookshelf upstairs for you. I went through my things a day or so ago."

When she had caught her breath, Anne said, "Julie, you will simply have to come more often. Things begin to happen when you're around. Miracles begin to happen."

Everyone except Ruff laughed, but as Ruff was busy congratulating himself on his good fortune while deciding how he could eat his ice cream and still get his hands on the boat before Hap changed his mind he might easily not have heard Anne.

Julie helped Anne clear the table. Ruff ran up-

stairs to assure himself that the boat was really where Hap had said it was, and came down, beaming, to help Hap wash dishes. Julie and Anne hurried through the drying and put the dishes away.

Anne, always fond of exhibiting Julie to her family, had discovered only today that Julie was to sing at the June Festival and though Julie hardly knew more than the first verse of "Greensleeves," Anne was generously offering Hap to her as an accompanist for an immediate rehearsal.

"Try it anyway," Anne urged.

A little alcove off the living room was called the music room. Hap and Anne led the way but Julie turned back. She had left her brief case with the sheet of music in it upstairs. She ran up to get it and coming down glanced back into the dining room. She saw that Mr. Harrison was showing Mrs. Harrison a bit in the newspaper.

Over the polished table with its neat bowl of evergreens in the center, they talked together. Mrs. Harrison's face was upturned and smiling and he had just said something that was making her laugh. *O wert thou in the could could blast*—the words came to her unbidden. For the moment it was she, Julie, who was alone and wandering on the rain-sodden windy lea. In the distance there was a lighted window and

as she approached and looked through it she saw the Harrisons, secure against cold and wind and rain. *I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee.* The words of warmth and happiness echoed in her ears.

Hap tried the music of "Greensleeves," and played it at once and Julie sang along with him, setting the tempo.

Anne's face reflected her pride in Julie. "You sing it beautifully, Julie. Miss Saunders is going to love it. I can hardly wait for the Festival."

Hap brought out a thick volume of songs and Mr. Harrison, coming in, asked Julie to sing "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes." Then Mrs. Harrison asked for "Charlie Is My Darling."

The Harrisons sat on their red leather sofa, hands loosely clasped, while Hap played and Julie sang

*Charlie is my darling,
my darling,
my darling,
Charlie is my darling,
The young chevalier.*

She loved to sing with the violin, she discovered, and now knew what her father had meant when he had said "Greensleeves" was particularly good with string accompaniment. The thin delicacy of the strings gave the song its proper long-ago setting.

"I'm looking forward to many more evenings of music," Mr. Harrison said, "and let's start them earlier." He looked at his watch. "It's almost nine. I'm afraid Mrs. Forrest will be worrying about Julie."

"I'll walk you halfway, Julie," Anne said. "But just 'Under the Greenwood Tree,' once, Dad?"

"All right, once under the greenwood tree," said Mr. Harrison and pulled Anne down beside him.

Julie sang and accompanied herself on the piano.

Under the greenwood tree

Who loves to lie with me. . .

And turn his merry note

Unto the sweet bird's throat.

Come hither, come hither, come hither:

Here shall he see

No enemy

But winter and rough weather. . .

"May I walk along?" Hap asked.

Although Anne was not altogether in favor of it, her mother reminded her that the last time she had walked Julie home they had walked each other back and forth five times before they parted. "Perhaps Hap will see it doesn't happen tonight," she said, smiling at them.

* * *

The evening air was cool. They were all three happy: Julie remembering enchantedly the crowded afternoon and evening. Hap with the music and the excitement and promise of the summer to come. And Anne because she was with Julie and that was always happiness enough.

"*Charlie is my darling,*" they hummed. The walk to take Julie home had this evening dwindled to nothing, it seemed to all three. It was shorter than any one of them remembered it to be.

"Good night, Anne and Hap, thank you for a lovely day and evening."

"Come again soon," said Hap. "We want more music."

"See you practically at dawn," Anne called back.

* * *

Julie climbed the stairs quickly.

"Hello. Did you think I was never coming?" she asked breathlessly.

Her mother had been reading and now looked up into Julie's animated face.

"There must have been lots of homework to catch up with."

"Oh, it wasn't only homework. We sang and Hap played and we had almost a party supper. Even ice cream. And Mother, Hap is going to an experi-

mental station for agricultural research next summer, if they'll take him. He's planning to have a farm. At least that's what Mr. Harrison wants to have later on. Imagine, a farm of their own. And Anne's mother wants to be remembered to you. Mr. Harrison had to chase me home, finally. But they loved the music."

"You wouldn't be wanting to exchange families, would you?"

Julie shook her head but she was hurt to think her mother had found out what she so often thought. "Where's Dad?"

"Coming in late this evening. Now, it's past bedtime for you, Julie." Her mother began to help undo Julie's hair, gently and firmly.

Julie was thinking that Mrs. Harrison was a darling and always looked as if she had just been combed and waved and manicured. But her mother was, well, her own. That was all there was to it. And Dad too. Theirs wasn't anything like the Harrison family, of course, and they didn't have quite so much noise and adventure and fun but, at times, and in their way they were happy too. She and Mother had lovely times together. She was always saying something to surprise you into laughing. And she had

lovely times with Dad. It was only their quarrels that were so bad. If only they didn't. Why did she have to think of that now, after so pleasant an evening? She began to think of the music again to shut out the unwelcome thought.

"I wish you could hear 'Greensleeves' with violin accompaniment, Mother. It sounds altogether different. Wonderful."

"Now, Julie, I've a serious problem to ask you to settle."

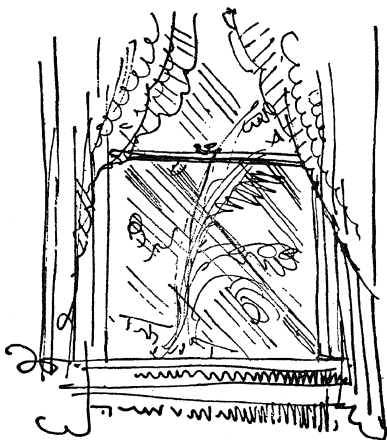
Julie, wonderingly, said, "You have?"

"Now, don't answer at once. Think it over. Would you," her mother went on, "still prefer to have a violin accompaniment if it were called a fiddle?"

"Oh, Mother!"

No, she would not want to exchange families.





UNTIL he mentioned the five dollars, it seemed to Julie she was dreaming. She heard her mother's voice coming from the sitting room. Though it was not morning, it was her early-morning voice, the angry words clipped and clear.

"It was so easy to avoid all that. You could have taken a cab as long as the money was in her pocket. Now she must have new shoes. She can't go to school if it should rain."

"I never knew she had the money with her," he said with finality as though wanting to put an end to the talk.

"You knew she was going to shop for me. Didn't you?"

"Oh, I never thought to ask her," he shouted impatiently. "It's humiliating not to have a dollar or two of my own. I shouldn't have to ask Julie for money."

"Well," she had stopped being angry and her voice was tired, "I just don't have it to give you. The party was expensive, as I knew it would be. But it was the only one in all the years she's been going to school. In all the ten years. I did want her to have invitations in return. I'd promised her the coat for her birthday, besides."

"All I say is she had five dollars. I had nothing."

"You ought to know it was the money for our food for the rest of the week."

No, it was not a dream. Too real, too loud and real, to be a dream. Their words were flashing swords in the darkness, cutting through the stillness

of the night, through the thin blankets over her head.

"I'm tired of this setup, I don't mind telling you," he said. "I'm tired of everything about it. I'm hounded and questioned and pushed around. Questioned even by Julie. Have you been asking her to get after me? And what's more I'm tired of being a nursemaid. I haven't a minute. Not a solitary minute to work out ideas of my own."

There was a pause. Julie, waiting for the swords to clash again, held her breath until it was painful.

Her mother said at last, "I'm a bit tired myself. My day begins at dawn. When does yours?" But she did not wait for the answer. She went on, not impatiently now but as though she were explaining something to a little child, slowly, "I earn our way, if you remember. Perhaps you don't remember. I've a family to take care of. You can always shake yours off, except when it amuses you to go sailing a toy boat, for instance—"

"You keep insisting," he interrupted, "that things are hard for you. Just remember all you have to do is make your rich relatives up at Vernal Bank give you what belongs to you. They drove quite a bargain, you know. And they've been laughing at you ever since. But your false pride stands in your way. But how about me? I haven't even had a chance

to work out a plan for myself. I'm too busy worrying about what you'll think of it. Why all this hurry anyway? It's only a year that I'm back. It takes that long, sometimes longer, for anyone to get his bearings."

"It's already been a lifetime, Jeff," she said. "It's always been this way, long before the Army. You've always been looking for some plan, some solution that will miraculously come. Miracles are pretty rare. Oh, Jeff, *anything* would do! Anything that will give us a decent living. I'm not ashamed to pound a typewriter. Why should you be ashamed to do something with your hands? Why not leave the whole field of music? There are thousands of other things to do."

"And what, may I ask, do you suggest?"

"Oh, anything. Driving a cross-town bus would be preferable to doing nothing."

"Driving a cross-town bus! Driving a cross-town bus!" He was furious with her. Julie could hear him stride quickly across the room and back.

"And Jeff, forget Roger and Vernal Bank. Roger owes me nothing. He's paid us our share long ago."

"Maybe you've got used to doing without me, Elisabeth," he said, still in a rage. "You make me feel I don't belong here. Maybe I don't. If Julie

didn't need me—" he stopped talking and pacing about. There was another long silence.

"I'm not sure she does, Jeff." Her mother's voice sounded farther away as if she had changed her place and gone to the other end of the room. "She probably wouldn't have fallen into the pond if you hadn't been taking care of her. And maybe it's just as you say, maybe you don't belong here," she said, as though all this time she had been thinking it over carefully. "Maybe you ought to be on your own after depending on me for so long. Julie and I will manage and I think you should find out how to do the same yourself."

Under the covers Julie's feet were cold and trembled for minutes at a time. It was only something she had known a long time, she told herself. The shutting-out trick had never really worked. She had heard most of this before, it seemed to her, most of it, only in scraps and now and then. But now she heard it all at once.

What would happen now? Maybe I don't belong here he had said. Maybe you don't she had answered. And what about me? Julie thought. Where had she heard someone asking that before? No, she had not heard it but she remembered the squirrels with their little hands to their chests. And what about me? She

seemed to be as small and disregarded as a squirrel.

Mother had made him be nursemaid all these years and he had always hated it although he pretended to like it. And he had thought Mother had told her to ask him about his song. It was a cruel thing to think.

A new spring rain was washing against the window. The wind flung a cascade against the panes, then the rain became a light pattering sound. In all the world she stood alone. Inconsolably lonely the foghorns sounded from the river. Alone, alone, they echoed. She would never have guessed he had not wanted her with him afternoons. Of all the things she had heard that was the unkindest of all. Her hot cheek lay against her pillow and the cool dampness of it sent her after a long while into heavy sleep.

* * *

There was something silken soft and warm pressing against her neck and then a stiff little brush of a tongue was on her wrist. Julie opened her eyes and looked into the blue eyes of Mr. Kunkel's gray-and-white kitten.

She sat up and held the kitten in her two hands and looked up at her mother standing at the foot of her bed.

All the harsh bitter words that had been tossed back and forth. Where were they? She could forget them now. The sight of her mother reassured her. Perhaps she had been restless and they had been part of a disturbing dream. Her mother wore her pretty gray suit but her hair was piled loosely on top of her head.

"How do you feel, Julie?"

"Perfectly well." She started up. "What time is it?"

"You've overslept a little. It's later than you'd guess but I hated to wake you. As long as you're so late I thought you might as well stay home today. I'm taking the morning off too."

"I've been absent so much lately when it was really necessary. But how in the world did you ever get her?" Julie buried her face in the kitten's fur. "Did you just pick her up and take her home?"

"No, indeed, that would be kidnapping, or should I say kittenapping. It seems Mr. Kunkel was training her for a big mousing job but she didn't take to the work. She preferred going outdoors at every opportunity, meaning whenever a customer opened the door, and making for a spot in the sun. We've no mice and we don't mind a lazy cat, so I thought she'd just suit us."

"She certainly does."

"And Mr. Kunkel was only too glad to get rid of this unbusinesslike cat. Now we'll get her some milk. I'll go so far as to predict she's going to like it much better with us. With us it's no work and all play. Stay in bed a little while longer, Julie. I'll set her bowl in here where you can see her."

The kitten now made the astounding discovery that Julie's feet were movable. Julie shifted one foot under the covers and up jumped kitten to attack a fancied enemy. Then Julie moved the other and a fierce battle was on.

Her mother brought in her sewing basket and sat beside Julie while the kitten, a bit shaky with battle fatigue, perched stiffly beside Julie's feet.

"She's a tidy little miss, isn't she?"

"Miss Tidy. Why not?" Julie asked. "How does it sound to you?"

"Perfect. And you know how that's spelled, of course."

"What's spelled?"

"*P-u-r-r-f-e-c-t.*"

"Mother!"

Her mother sewed rapidly. The pile of stockings and mending decreased in size. Watching her mother's flying fingers on a stocking, Julie said, "No knobs, please, at the back."

"Well, we can't throw away these good stockings.

Just because of a little hole at the heel. Can we? And a knob at the back is a bit more unusual, don't you think, than the ordinary flat or rounded back?"

Julie laughed. "They're *my* feet, Mother. Please let me do my own."

Julie sewed with great care remembering painfully the bumpy places that rubbed her heels.

Nothing was changed. Everything was the same. Had she dreamed all of it? It was still early. Soon Dad would be up and perhaps he too like her mother was the same as always. It was only that last night she had not shut out the words with her trick of concentrating hard on something else. That was really all it was.

Her mother said, "Would you like me to read to you?"

But suppose it had not been a nightmare. Disturbingly she thought, suppose it had happened and he had meant it all, every word of it, and suppose she had meant it too, and suppose she would send him away as she had said she would. Suppose he left them. There were only three of them to begin with. Less than three people couldn't even be called a family, could it?

Her mother said again, "Julie, would you like me to read to you?"

"I'd love it, Mother, but I'm perfectly well. I could go to school and be late for once."

"I know, but you've only just got over a cold and it's a wet day besides." Her mother took up the book that lay beside Julie's bed and began, "*Queequeg was a native of Kokovoko, an island far away to the West and South. It is not in any map. . .*"

Julie tried hard to pay attention to Melville's strange tale, but while she listened she waited for a sound from the bedroom. He would be getting up about now. She strained to hear. And as no sound came from the bedroom all the angry hurting words came back.

When she had read for a little while, her mother laid down the book. "Would you like me to brush your hair, Julie?"

"Oh, yes."

Her mother's hands were very gentle, not at all hurried as they were mornings when Julie was getting ready for school and asked for help with a knot. Was that Dad getting up now? It sounded as if a window shade were going up.

The wind blustered and the rain tapped at the window noisily, now a merry springtime tattoo, and again a sad slow drip drip against the pane. A sentence came tumbling back out of the night before,

She can't go to school if it should rain. Julie caught her breath. So that was it. Her mother was keeping her in bed, and her shoes were the reason.

"Do you love the sound of the spring rain as much as I do, Julie?" her mother asked.

"There's a good deal of pushing around on a rainy day at school and mixed up rubbers. The whole school smells of rubbers and rain."

Her mother laughed. "I know, I remember it. But it's a pleasant smell. At least I used to think so."

Julie shut her eyes. Her mother was right. Remembering it was pleasant. Out there the rain was clean and fresh and softly pattering against the windows, tapping out regrets for not being a bright morning. Into the wet earth it fell waking the hidden curled-up things underneath. If she shut her eyes altogether and thought about it she could almost smell the wet earth smell. But last night the sound of the foghorns and the rain was sad as she lay listening in her bed. Now the gray wetness reminded her of the bitter angry words.

Her mother finished brushing her hair. Julie began absently to braid it. She pinned up the braids on top of her head and it felt neat but she did not look into the mirror. At last she had begun to admit to herself that it had not been a dream and all the time she had

known it had not been a dream. In spite of the fact that her mother was finding things to laugh at, as usual.

Better know right away, the rain tapped out urgently against the window. Better know. Better know. Patter, patter, better know, better know.

"Last night, Mother, I couldn't sleep very well. I guess that was why I overslept."

It seemed a very long time before her mother answered.

"Do you mean you heard us?" She sounded as if she were apologizing.

Julie nodded.

"I kept hoping you didn't. I kept hoping you were sleeping soundly. I wanted to tell you myself rather than have you overhear quarreling voices. Julie, don't take every word seriously. I needed to speak plainly because it's not easy to jog anyone out of the habits of a lifetime. That's what I tried to do. Do you see, Julie?"

"I think so."

"I'll try to explain. It's this way, Julie. Each one of us has responsibilities. For instance, you are my responsibility. I've been thinking that I must take better care of you than I have been doing. I must find some way of being with you for longer times,

exactly as you yourself want me to do. It's only fair that children should have mothers all the time, or most of the time, Julie, not just for snatches. Do you agree, Julie?"

"Yes, Mother."

"I know you've heard it said often enough that no one is too old to learn. I'd like Jeff to learn, now that he's back from the war, that he must not depend upon me, or anyone but himself. We're all dependent upon each other, of course, but no one person should shoulder the whole burden. All of us working together, all of us being happy together, that's what a family means."

Better know. Better know. Now she was finding out.

"Well, then, are you sending him away?" she asked. Her lips were very dry.

"For a little while, it's the best way. And, Julie, he's gone already. We talked it over for a long time. I think he saw at last that I was right. He must do something to help us, something more than just being with you afternoons. And helping us will help him too because a person isn't useful even to himself making halfhearted starts at things, never finishing anything."

She remembered struggles with lines of her own.

"Tunes must be very hard to think out," she said.

"Perhaps he needs to work alone, in the beginning. Anyway he must try. If he finds it too hard, he may have to give up music and try something else."

No boat pond and no one waiting afternoons. She did not think he would try something else. He had been very angry when he had repeated, *driving a cross-town bus*.

"And, Julie, do you really think you need someone to take care of you when school is over?"

"Oh, no." Three is absolutely the minimum size for a family.

"You shop and cook for us, so I feel certain you can take care of yourself too. There's always the library. And you should begin to study singing about now. And why not join the Dramatic Group which you so much wanted to do last year? I'll help you with the small matter of dues. Also, there is always Anne who is such good company. Besides all of which, I'll still be home at six every day, you know. . . . Look at all the music I found packed away in a chest."

Her mother went to the piano and Julie slipping into her bathrobe came and stood beside her. A thick volume of songs was open on the piano.

"Everything's here that you could ever have time

for," her mother said, "and listen to this,

The first day of Christmas

My true love sent to me

A partridge in a pear tree . . ."

She played the ancient ballad and glanced up at Julie and saw that she was not even listening.

Her mother turned from the piano and stood up beside Julie.

"I'm not pretending it's going to be easy, Julie. We'll miss him in spite of knowing that it's the best way." She put her arm gently round Julie's shoulders. "But when he does come back to us, feeling he can give us a few of the things we've been needing, perhaps a pair of shoes to change into in case one pair gets wet or a coat that doesn't take all our money to buy, we'll all be happier. I don't think he knows it yet, but it'll make him the happiest."

She held Julie a little closer.

"And it's not forever," she said. "Remember how it was when he went into the Army? You were very sensible about it then. It may not be for so long this time, not nearly so long."

Her mother's voice was steady and strong and comforting. Her mother was smaller than she was and frail-looking but she was strong too. She could easily forget about straightening a room or even

about looking to see if she were properly brushed or if her hair were neatly combed. But about some things she was very particular and knew everything and remembered everything.

"There will be no more angry words, then, Julie, no quarrels to wake you in the middle of the night."

Comforting and soothing words. Cool water washing an angry bruise. Comforting words making things right again that had gone wrong. Bringing together things flown apart and broken. All the king's horses and all the king's men could, after all, put Humpty Dumpty together again. It was only a matter of trying.

"Then we'll have more time together, Julie. And we'll have the old happy times we had for a little while when you were very young. Perhaps you don't even remember."

Her father lifted her over his head and she rode along on his shoulders, breathlessly high above the world. And safe too. There were trees and grass and yellow flowers that looked like daffodils but were taller and larger and deeper yellow. A leafy branch brushed against her and off went her hat. Her mother caught it and held it up to her. It was a white bonnet with a wide ruffle round it. They were all three laughing.

"Oh, yes, Mother."

“And, Julie, I’d better tell you at once, so there will be nothing you don’t know about our new life. We’re going to move ourselves, and Miss Tidy, of course, to a place that will be easier for us to take care of. We’re going to make an exchange. Our four small rooms for one huge one, and we’ll take our best things with us. Now, let’s see, the cherrywood table, the clock and the beehive teapot, the brass lamp, the Winslow Homer water color, and all your things, of course. It’s a very large room and cheerful and very light. That means we can save all the rent we’ve been paying here and have a little over. And, this is the best part, the new place is a block closer to school.”

Another change? All inside of her was still numb and cold over the first news. She did not want to change. While they waited for her father to come back she wanted to stay on here with the corner of park to look at out of the window and all her things neatly arranged on her shelves.

“What about the piano?”

“Mrs. Aspinwall didn’t even want to see the place. It was enough for her to know there is a piano. She especially asked. So I have to let it stay on here until we come back. You see, I’m subletting this furnished, but she is kind enough to let us take out our favorite

things. I was very anxious to have it that way. I hope you'll help me put things in order here because I've planned to make the exchange by the end of this week. And later in the day I'll show you the new place."

She did not want to see it. She did not care at all about seeing it.

"I'd met Mrs. Aspinwall quite a few times at Kunkel's and each time heard how desperately she wanted a larger place to make room for her son, who is back from overseas, and his wife. I mentioned our place to her this morning and she was so delighted she asked me to come right back with her to look at hers. It's really very nice. It was on the way home that I picked up Miss Tidy. You'll want to start packing, Julie, some time today or tomorrow. You could begin filling the big suitcase in your closet. I'll get it for you."

"I can get it myself, Mother."

* * *

Julie sat on the floor with the bottom drawer of her desk pulled out all the way. Inside were neat piles of letters and a thin notebook. Her long legs covered most of the width of the room, but at the moment she felt as if she were being picked up as one

picks up a tiny baby. Now they were going to move away from here. Any kind of party was impossible in a one room apartment. And how could she ever tell Anne about moving into a smaller place? And what about the reason for it? She could never explain the reason.

Here were the poems she had been writing ever since she had come to high school. Some were this year's and some last and here was the one Miss Willoughby had said had very fine feeling. On top were all the new ones that not even Miss Willoughby had seen and here was a sheet with only the three lines,

Whisper of wind in a narrow street,

Who can hear its secret complete?

Who can remember that April is fleet?

She read the lines over and remembered how much her mother disliked it when her father began something and did not finish it. "Making half-hearted starts at things, never finishing them," she had said. Perhaps when she grew up she too would be someone who made halfhearted starts at things, poems that were like his tunes. She shook her head at the thought. It was no use at all taking these along. She felt she had already outgrown them. They belonged to her childhood and that seemed very far away.

She leafed through the book quickly, stopping now and then to read a line, and began to tear each page out, then tore it first in half, then in half again. The slips of paper fluttered down. Little parts of the old me, good-by. She had little patience now with the rain-laden clouds edged with gold and silver-frosted moons that mingled and lay at the bottom of the wastepaper basket.

* * *

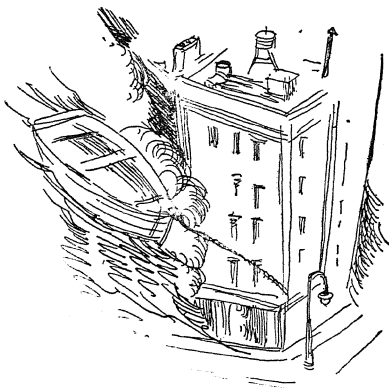
They opened the door and set down Miss Tidy, and her mother said, "Well, Julie, here we are." It was big and bright and bare, and the bathroom was almost as large as another room. There were two sets of bookshelves and one of them would be hers, she thought, and there were two beds exactly alike beside each other. Sleeping close to her mother would make up a little, she felt, for being alone all afternoon.

Julie went to the window. They had climbed four flights and now overlooked a row of brownstone houses. On the roof opposite, three chimney flues resembled three thin ladies wearing smart spring sailor hats but one of the ladies had had hers knocked to a precarious angle.

"Mother," she turned quickly, "does Dad know where we are?"

“Of course, Julie. He’ll write, he said, as soon as possible.” She added, “We’ve a great deal to do here. We’ll change the beds into day beds by removing the headboards that never were meant for them in the first place. And we’ll set the beds inside the corner so they form an angle. I’ve some homespun covers for them that will take away the bedroom look of the place. And let’s put the Homer on this big empty wall. That *will* be an improvement. And our cherry table will look lovely with the brass lamp for mealtimes. And we’ll use our good rug right here. Doesn’t it look better already, Julie?”

“Oh, it does.”



ONE step at a time. Slowly. Julie, you're holding up all the traffic, Viola called and ran quickly down ahead of her. Then down another flight at a snail's pace. Only one more now past the auditorium with the names of Honor Students in gold letters on the oak-paneled walls. Then the wide open doors and a blaze of sunlight.

Eyes tightly closed for a whole minute. Now, quickly look. Not today again. Wait a minute or two. Anyone could be late five minutes and this instant might be hurrying along to the corner. He had not waited for her for two weeks. Two weeks was a short time. April was only half over yet it seemed ages since that early morning when she had first seen Miss Tidy. Years since the walk home in the sunshine with Anne. No, it had not been a short time.

She would never believe he had meant it. He had said he was tired of being a nursemaid because he was angry at that moment. Because later he started to say, If Julie didn't need me—. He knew she needed him. Even if Mother said she could manage without him. Hello, Julie, my girl, he'd say when he came along, in a minute or so. I'm busy but I had to come to see you for a little while. Mother said he couldn't come if he were at work in an office somewhere or in a factory.

She began to walk to the corner and caught herself playing a game of her childhood. If I don't step on a single line, he'll be there when I get to the corner. But if I do, he won't. She did not step even on a crack.

She stood looking down the street until the sun made her eyes ache. Miss Willoughby came walking toward her on her way home.

"Waiting, Julie, or coming my way?"

"I'll have to wait, Miss Willoughby."

Miss Willoughby paused and said, "I haven't seen much of you lately, Julie, and I did hope you would have something for me. Even a quatrain would be nice to have for the Yearbook." Miss Willoughby had the air at the moment of making a request for a modest donation to a charity. Her fingers opened and fluttered closed on her handbag. "Even something you've already written would be fine. Could you find something for me, Julie?"

Julie's attention wandered. Though she tried to concentrate on what Miss Willoughby was saying she could not help looking down the street. "I haven't written a thing lately, Miss Willoughby. Somehow I don't seem to have time to write."

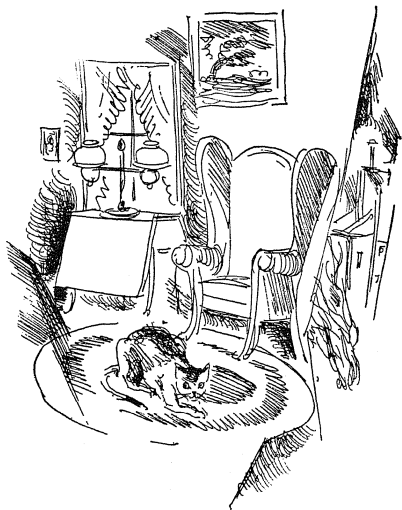
"Oh, you should be in the Yearbook, Julie. Come to see me when you have something you'd like me to see."

"Yes, I will."

"Good-by, Julie."

"Good-by, Miss Willoughby."

Even the late ones had by now straggled off. There was Miss Tidy to feed. Perhaps she could begin an apron today for her mother. There was a good-sized piece of red-and-yellow calico she had found in a drawer just before they moved. She had



taken it along. A green pocket would be nice on it. And there was one stop to make. And the dusting to do. And learning the words of more verses of "Greensleeves" for Miss Saunders and the Music Festival. But all the same the afternoon ahead stretched endlessly away. Endlessly and drearily. Slowly she began to walk toward home.

She knew he had no key to their new place but each day, opening the door, she could not help taking a quick hopeful look round the room. Now, as always, only Miss Tidy greeted her and rubbed against her legs and wove in and out around her feet.

She opened the window wide and dusted and straightened the room and then looked at the clock. Only a quarter past four after all that waiting and slow walking and dusting. She went to the broom closet and brought out the polishing wax and carefully, almost as expertly as her mother would have done, rubbed the wax into the sewing table, making the carved places gleam dully with reflected lights. Then she polished the cherry table and the maple of the big wing chair.

These were all things that had belonged to Grandmother Berwick. Only the fabric of the wing chair was new. Julie's mother had grown up with these things and remembered them as part of her own childhood in Vernal Bank. And because of their long familiarity they seemed to Julie like members of the family, settled and sedate and elderly. She was pleased they had come along with them. They brought with them to their one room a feeling of its still being home.

From a bookshelf Julie lifted the stacked music that her mother had taken along and caught sight of his manuscript paper under the pile of songs. He had not taken his music along. That could only mean he intended coming back soon.

She seated herself at the table with the music of "Greensleeves" open before her and began to sing. Her voice, unaccompanied by an instrument, sounded wavering to her and untrue—

Alas, my love, you do me wrong

To cast me off discourteously.

And I have loved you so long,

Delighting in your company . . .

You do me wrong to cast me off discourteously. And I have loved you so long, delighting in your company. She reread the words silently. Up to now they had been the words of a song but now they became words written for her. Once more she read the first four lines of "Greensleeves." Now there was no room to think of any other thing but her loneliness.

She laid her head on her folded arms on the table. People died of broken hearts and loneliness too, no doubt. Her mother would come home and find her dead.

Soon her father would know of it and together they would stand beside her and vow never to quarrel again. Not that that would bring her back to life.

She would continue to lie dead. Her mother would say, So good and helpful to me, dusting and waxing on her last day. They would weep and weep over her.

Tears came to her eyes. Miss Tidy, struck by a notion to leap through the air, estimated the distance carefully and made a perfect landing in Julie's lap. The little rough tongue went busily over Julie's arm and plainly said, "Come, Julie, if I'm here you can't be that lonely, can you? There and there, you're not a bit lonely now, are you?" And Julie picked up Miss Tidy and held her close to her damp face and whispered to her, "You do cheer me up, darling Miss Tidy."

Julie moved with Miss Tidy into her mother's wing chair and opened *Moby Dick* where they had left off the day she stayed home from school.

First she read slowly, making an enormous effort to forget her sharp loneliness, then the spellbinding words absorbed her, shutting out everything but the dark turbulent adventure in search of the great white whale.

* * *

Julie's mother had said she might be a few minutes late this evening. She looked tired when she came at last, her arms filled with packages.

"I could have helped you shop, Mother. I had only the thread to buy."

"I hadn't really planned to buy these. I just happened to be passing by and saw a few things I could use."

Julie undid the packages. "Soda bread? We haven't had it since—" She looked quickly up at her mother. "Do you expect Dad tonight?" she asked. "Do you?"

"No, dear, but I went to the address he left. I thought I would bring him these, and find out how he was managing."

"Did you see him?" She would have loved to go along if she had only known.

"No," she said. "He isn't there. He doesn't live there."

Julie leaned against the wall. He was gone. He did not want them to know where he was. And so there would be no use waiting for him at 3:15. There was almost no use thinking they would ever be a family again. "Where can he be?"

"I don't know," her mother replied. "Perhaps he decided against letting us see him until he was ready. Perhaps he thought we might come and be sorry for him in that wretched little place and make him come back with us and everything would be the same. Then he'd have had no chance to prove anything."

"Yes," Julie grasped at the slender straw. It was that way. It had to be.

Her mother lifted Julie's chin and studied her face. "Julie, let me see you look glad to see me. I won't even ask why you've been crying."

"I've been singing, and reading—besides crying," Julie made an effort to look more cheerful.

"And you've fed the cat. She's busy washing."

"And here's the thread."

"Not a speck of dust anywhere, and lots of high polish on all our fine things."

"I'll set the table for supper while you have a rest, Mother, and I'll put the food you brought onto plates. I'd have begun on an apron, too, but I took up *Moby Dick* and that was the end of doing anything."

Julie laid a cloth on the cherry table and lighted the table lamp and set out the silver at each place. And her mother turned on another lamp beside the chair in which she sat while she glanced at Julie over the letter she was beginning to read.

The room sprang into friendliness. Julie comforted herself with the memory of what her mother had said. He was living somewhere else and working hard and waiting until he had something important to tell them. That was how it was. But she did not wait so long, so hopefully, at the school corner next day, nor the day after.

And then, one afternoon, he was there. Without a word of warning. While she was wondering how she could ever find him if she had to tell him some piece of wonderful news.

He was there, waiting for her as if it were a usual thing for her these days to look up and see him standing at the corner as she came out of school. Exactly as he used to do.

He was the same, every bit the same, but there was also something different, she saw, as she hurried toward him. A kind of newness about him. Why, the suit, of course. Yes, that was new and so were the shining shoes. And beautiful light gloves. Her heart was bursting with pride at the way he looked.

"Julie, my girl, you've surely grown up in this short time. Why, you're up to my shoulder."

How could he even think it had been short, when it had been so horribly long.

"I've looked for you every day and waited. And waited." But she did not want to waste time over herself. "What's new?" she asked him. "What's new and special?" using his same words, his old same words.

"Well, Julie, my girl, let's see."

She looked at him in astonishment. So great a change, so much new and shining and yet, *let's see*, as though there weren't a hundred things to tell her.

But it was just his way of surprising her. Suddenly. He'd tell her in a minute. She could play that game too, if she tried very hard, if she sat on herself and kept the lid on. "*Con sordino*," he used to say when she was smaller and tried to tell him everything at once, "*con sordino*." It came from music and meant "with the lid on." They had turned toward the park and were walking toward the big lake and she was quiet *con sordino* waiting for him to tell her and beginning to be a little uneasy because he wasn't telling her yet.

He began to whistle and she listened pretending not to. Was it the song? His song? Was it going on now? Perhaps it was the big surprise. No. She recognized what he was whistling. Something that she heard often on the radio. *How deep is the ocean? How far to a star?* it went.

"You certainly look fine," she said.

"Glad you think so," he said. "I like this outfit myself. Been managing all right at home?"

Oh, no, she wanted to tell him, terribly in fact. She would not want him to be worried about her and feel sorry for her but she had to tell him somehow about the empty afternoons.

"Well, Dad—" she began.

"And how's school?" he said. And then, "What about a hot dog, Julie, my girl? Come on. My treat

now and let's walk around the big lake and watch them rowing for a bit."

He did not want to know. He really did not want to know. He did not wait for her to answer. Perhaps it was the park that was taking his mind off the things they wanted to talk about. If only he'd come home with her. He began to whistle again *How deep is the ocean? How far to a star?* and they came to the lake and stood watching the rowers.

"I don't want anything to eat," she said.

"There's a nice long stroke," he said, "see that, Julie, all the way back with your oars like the girl in the green sweater."

"Dad," she said, "will you come home with me? It'll be a lovely surprise for Mother. Once she went to the address you left us, you know."

"She did?" He looked uncomfortable.

"Oh, yes, and brought you things she thought you'd like, but you'd left by then. Could you, Dad?"

"Could I what, Julie, my girl?" He was at ease again.

"Come home for dinner with me. I know a place Mother told me about. We could get soda bread there. And we'll get other things I can easily prepare and we'd have the table all set."

"It's a fine idea, Julie, my girl, and we'll do it one of these days. As a matter of fact I've an appoint-

ment at five or we'd do it today. Why, if I didn't have the appointment we could have taken a boat out right now. And you could have tried out your rowing lessons."

"Could you change the appointment as long as we're here and we could have dinner together tonight? I'd love to row even for a half hour, Dad." It was going to be hard to let go the rowing idea now they were so close to it, and his coming home with her too.

"No, Julie, I couldn't. It's not an appointment I can break."

No doubt whatever about it. Definitely so. Definitely *no*.

He glanced at his wrist watch. "Well, I'll walk you back a bit and we'll have to be saying good-by. I'll write you soon and we'll meet again, Julie, my girl."

They turned toward home and he glanced at his watch again. She glanced at it too. It was a handsome square silver one with a silver strap. That was new too. Walking beside him it seemed to her at the moment that she was very far from him.

"If you're in a hurry," she said, "perhaps you'd better leave me here. I have to do some shopping."

"All right, Julie, my girl, I *will* have to hurry now. And I *will* write. Good-by, Julie."

"Good-by, Dad."

She had walked a whole street away before she remembered she hadn't even asked him for his new address.

She turned about but he had disappeared from sight. A dark gray car drove by and he was still so much in her mind that she thought it was he sitting in the front seat beside the woman who was driving. The car turned the corner, and she began to think about how to tell her mother about their meeting. He wore new clothes and he had a wrist watch. But what else was there to tell her? He was in a hurry. He had come to meet her and had gone in a hurry and that was about all. And it had ended with his not wanting to come home with her. He'd had no time to take her rowing.

Her mother might be as puzzled and disappointed about the whole thing as she was. She thought about it all the time she was shopping and when she came out of the store had decided to say nothing about it. Nothing at all would be best. Anyway he had absolutely promised to write.

* * *

Mrs. Forrest had a note one morning from Mrs. Aspinwall.

"She says," Julie's mother glanced at the letter

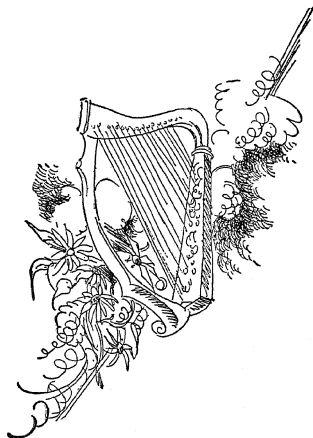
and told Julie who was stirring the cereal, "that the carved walnut chest I set away in the hall closet is one she's been looking for all her life. *I want to send it as a gift to a dear friend who is about to be married*, she read aloud, *that is, if you can bear to part with it, and as I have a hundred dollars to spend for this purpose, I hope I may induce you*— She looked up at Julie, "A hundred dollars!"

"Isn't that the chest for storing winter things in summer?" Julie asked.

"Yes, but there are two or three such in Uncle Roger's house. Grandmother Berwick had one in each of her bedrooms. I'll send for one when we need it, if Mrs. Aspinwall badly wants this one. But I couldn't take a hundred dollars for it." She studied the letter all over again and looked at it once more before they left the house. "It would certainly help us have a longer vacation, Julie."

"Well then, why not sell it to Mrs. Aspinwall, if we can get another like it?"

"I believe I will," she said, as though she had been waiting for Julie's consent. "Yes, I will."



THE bell rang noisily, a long ring and two short ones. "*Ex-press*," shouted a man's voice up the stair well. "*Ex-press*." Doors were opened, heads appeared out of them, and disappeared as quickly. "I'll go," said Julie, already out of the door and running down the stairs.

It was an oblong crate marked *Fragile* on all sides and *Handle with Care*. She was hardly able to carry it herself, and her mother, wondering about her slow progress, came down the four flights when she caught a glimpse of it.

"It's from Dad," Julie whispered. "Addressed to me. What can it be?"

Together, each holding an end, they cautiously lifted it up the narrow width of the stairs. On the first landing, Julie backed into a door inadvertently left half-open. And on the second landing, crate and Julie both collided with a man going downstairs in a hurry. The third landing was without adventure, but Miss Tidy took the opportunity of running all the way downstairs having observed that Mrs. Forrest had left the door open. The cat had to be retrieved before proceeding upward, while Julie's curiosity burned more and more fiercely.

At last they arrived upstairs and laid the crate on the floor. Hastily they undid the heavy corrugated paper that lay beneath the wood box. Inside there was a smaller and lighter wood box and inside that a stiff black case. It was fastened shut with a pair of strong hasps and when they opened these, there, like a strange jewel, lay a small harp.

The frame was black, darkly gleaming, and tiny

bright enameled flowers and golden leaves decorated the rim.

Julie was the first to take it up. She held it with the greatest care and then laid it down to look unbelievably at the address again. She ran her fingers lightly over the strings, and a sweet rippling sound hung in the air. This made up, she felt, for the disappointment of the other day. Perhaps he was that very day hurrying to have it sent to her.

"An Irish harp, a small, perfectly made Irish harp! Julie, here is the accompaniment for your songs."

"Do you think I can learn to play it? I wouldn't know how to begin. I don't even know how to hold it."

"We will have to find someone to teach you, of course."

"Where can the return address be?" Julie was still turning over the boards of the crate searching for it. It reminded them of the times when a letter came from Captain Jeffrey Forrest with a string of letters and numbers following his name instead of an address. But there was no return address on the crate to tell them from where he had sent it.

"Wait a minute," her mother said, turning to Julie suddenly. "I think I've just the place."

"Place for what?"

"For learning the harp, Julie. I'd almost forgotten, it's been so long. What about East House?"

"I've seen a small sign over one of the doors when I've passed by. It says East Music School."

"It's still the same then. You know I used to leave you at East House Nursery and I remember the little sign well. Suppose you try tomorrow. And be sure to ask if Mrs. Rita Bentley is still there. If you see her, give her my fondest regards. And look in at the nursery for old times' sake. I wish I could come with you."

"It's only a walk from here."

"I know but Mrs. Bentley isn't there evenings and evenings would be the only time I could come. I haven't seen her for years. That's how it seems to be in New York. Around the corner might as well be miles away. Having different hours I never meet her. Come to think of it I haven't even seen the people who are our near neighbors in this house, though we've been here for weeks." She studied Julie's face amusedly. "She may remember you, at that. Your face hasn't changed so very much."

"I guess I'll always look like a baby, an unusually long-legged baby." Julie frowned deeply.

"Perhaps I only think so. You may have to intro-

duce yourself to her all over again. Tell her I especially wanted you to meet her. And she'll surely have a suggestion for you. Perhaps Anne could be persuaded to go along with you for company."

"Shall I take the harp with me to school, then, and go to East House right after school?"

"I'd say better come back here to get it. We must be very careful with it. And feed Miss Tidy while you're here. And then Anne and you can go together."

Anne come here? She hadn't even told her they had moved. First it had seemed only a little while before they would be back in the old place. But now it did not seem as if it would be so short a time. Perhaps they would be here for a whole year. Perhaps longer. Anne would have to know sooner or later. It had better be tomorrow and have it over with. Like a splinter coming out. Quick, painful, there! That's how it would be. Julie pressed down her mouth into a straight firm line. Anyway she had something to do after school. Something that was not actually meeting Dad but close to it. And his beautiful harp would go with her.

For a long time after they went to bed they talked together tonight, while fingers of light from the street traffic wagged on the ceiling. One part of her was an old wise lady who knew the ways of the

world, and was aware of everything—even of her mother's long disappointment in her father. And tonight she knew too that in spite of the disappointment she could still be hopeful. Her mother had not talked to her at such length since he had left them. Her voice was different tonight, more eager, because of the gift that had not even come to her but to Julie, their daughter.

It did not seem too hard to believe that he was coming back to them. Not immediately perhaps, but soon. And they would be a family again. Mother would be at home with her then and her father would come home to them as Mr. Harrison came home to his family. Or he would work at home doing something he liked to do instead of just planning to do something and being restless and impatient over not doing it. And her mother would never again have to worry over every penny they spent.

And one part of her remained a little girl who loved to hear about her young childhood. "I think I remember the window at East House. Enormous, wasn't it, with a sort of terrace outside? How old was I when you first took me there?"

"Not quite old enough to walk, about a year and a few months, I think. They told me you were good-natured and did not mind at all being left alone. Do you remember the sandbox? You liked it the best.

Later on there were seesaws and slides. Soon you were big enough to go to a nursery school. After that I could leave you with Jeff because you were old enough."

Sometimes when she thought about her earliest childhood she was able to remember her father doing some odd task about the house and how he looked doing it. And she remembered how he looked, feeding her out of a blue bowl divided into three places. But she could not remember her mother's face in those early days. She did not speak of it to her mother though sometimes she thought of it.

Now she said, "Mother, did we see each other only by appointment?"

"Just about, Julie. I saw you early in the morning for an hour or two and again when I came to collect you and took you home. It seemed to me you took care of yourself mostly. I'd like to see a little more of you now. I don't quite know how to manage it. I've got to think more about it but I know that it will come to me."

A question about her father was in Julie's mind. Wasn't that why he was away from them, to solve just that? But her mother was thinking of it too.

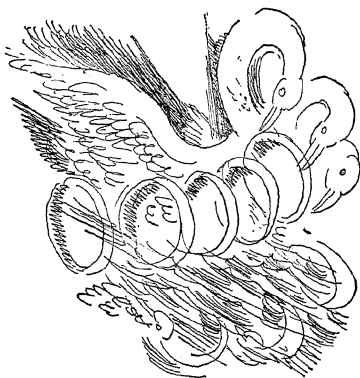
"It's so very difficult to make a start in music, especially writing music. Sometimes it takes years. And sometimes even after long years there are only

small rewards. Meanwhile we'll have to manage."

Julie thought of his new clothes and how fine he looked the last time she had seen him. Something had already happened. But he was not sure yet, perhaps. Her mother would see for herself soon. He would write and then she would see him and know.

"Meanwhile," her mother continued, "may be a long time, however. I wish I could think of something to help us over the next few years. Almost anything will do. Almost anywhere as long as we can be together."

A small gust of wind swept into the room from the open window. Julie breathed deeply. It was a different smell from the park-laden smell in the other house. A city smell that the young spring wind mingled with. "As long as we can be together—" that was what she too wanted most of all. It was as though the wind and the spring air held a promise, undefined and tantalizing. She closed her eyes. Together. All of us. And her mother in her sea green dressing gown sitting at the table under the lamp with the light on her hair that was piled high. And her father playing the piano while she sang "Green-sleeves," and played on the harp. The old place with the window overlooking Kunkel's. All three laughing. Oh, and Miss Tidy too, of course. . . . She was all at once asleep.



MISS WILLOUGHBY looked up in surprise as Julie hurried by her door and went running down the school stairs at 3:15 next day.

Instead of slowly walking down and lingering at each step, instead of waiting, instead of looking toward the corner, Julie called to Anne on her way out, "Anne, wait for me."

"Going straight home?" Anne called back.

"Yes."

"No waiting around today?"

Julie looked toward the corner, a single swift glance, then shook her head. "Not today. I'm going home for a few minutes but then I'm going to East House. Come with me?" She had waited until the last minute to ask her.

"I'll come with you, Julie, if I can tell my mother I'm going to be late getting home. East House? That's where Hap gets music lessons."

"Does he?" Julie said. "Good, then I can too."

Anne looked mystified and Julie said, "You're about to see something, Anne."

"Are you going to study singing at last?"

"Wait and see something."

Anne stopped to telephone and came out of the telephone booth in cheerful mood. "Hap answered. He got home early and he's got my bike greased. I hope he remembers about telling Mother I'll be late. Where are we going? This isn't your street."

"It is now. We've moved. My father's away from home working on something special."

"When did all this happen?"

"A while ago."

They went up and together fed Miss Tidy. Anne

looked around once, then began to ask Julie, "But where—" and stopped. Julie went to the closet and brought out the black case and, making the most of Anne's suspense, slowly opened it. Speechless, eyes roundly shining, Anne examined the harp.

"It's beautiful," she said at last.

"It's from my father. Isn't it wonderful?"

"Wonderful? Why, it's—it's unheard of."

"Now, Anne, let's go."

* * *

Yes, she had been here a long time ago. The pleasant green walls were oddly familiar. A feeling of being at the end of a long journey took hold of her. The end of a long journey and coming home at last and something new beginning.

Julie led the way and Anne followed her to the large desk at the head of the reception room. Julie's heart pounded with excitement. Something new beginning. The harp he had sent promised all sorts of unknown longed-for fulfillment once she had learned to play it. All the songs she sang would be twice as lovely accompanied by the harp. If only there were someone to teach her. She thought of the rippling sound of it. How startling it had been when she had first run her fingers over it. She had touched

it and the accidental sounds she had provoked had been like an introduction to a lovely old ballad.

Something new and happy beginning, reminding her of the time when she had been little, listening to her father play, asking him to show her the notes of the piano. Then, later, playing the notes he had shown her in a baby march, a familiar song, a bit of Mozart, a country dance. I can play something I made up, Dad. Please, listen. Not bad, Julie, my girl. Not at all bad.

"Can you tell me," she asked in a mouse voice, "if I may have music lessons here?" She hesitated to mention the harp specifically. Suppose they did not teach it here.

"Why, yes, yes indeed, this is a music school. Which instrument?" The lady at the desk was handing Julie a blue-lined card. "Write in all the information asked for and bring it back here to me. I am Mrs. Bentley."

"Mrs. Bentley?" Up to this moment she had forgotten, in her anxiety, what her mother had told her. "I'm Julie Forrest. My mother told me to ask especially for you. Do you remember my mother, Mrs. Elisabeth Forrest?"

"Julie Forrest," Mrs. Bentley said and repeated the name. She came from behind the desk. Tall Mrs.

Bentley put both her hands on Julie's slender shoulders. "Well, here you are, grown-up. I must say I was right." Whatever it was she was right about she did not tell Julie of it. "We all liked you so well here, Julie, we hoped you'd come back to see us some day. Now here you are. How tall and grown-up you are. Sixteen, I should say?"

"Past fifteen." Julie was pleased to have been mistaken for sixteen.

"How is your mother, Julie?" Mrs. Bentley was thinking that if Julie's mother were free to come she would surely have been here today with Julie.

"She is fine, Mrs. Bentley. She sends her kindest regards."

She had managed to bring up a splendid daughter, it was easy to see. Looking at Julie was enough to tell her so.

"Well then, Julie, now that we've reintroduced ourselves after so long, we'll get to the music. You want to study and I must help you. What have you there?"

"My father sent it to me. I'd love to learn to play it." Julie carefully lifted the harp out of its case.

"My, how exquisite," Mrs. Bentley said, studying it through glasses she put on for the purpose. If he sent it, as Julie said, he was elsewhere. Not with

them. "There is one person here who is an accomplished harpist but whether he teaches the harp I'm not at all sure. However, we shall soon find out. Now come with me."

They looked round for Anne but she had disappeared.

"Let's go upstairs," Mrs. Bentley said, "or we may miss Mr. Hudek. His 4:30 pupil will be here in a little while."

They walked through wide cool corridors painted the same soft green as downstairs. Along the way they heard from behind the closed doors of the music rooms a piano falteringly played, the deep tones of a bass viol, a beginner painfully climbing the scale on a violin and a young fresh voice hesitantly trying "Come to the Fair."

Mrs. Bentley knocked at the last door, then opened it softly.

"Come in."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Hudek. I've someone here I'd like you to meet. And we both would like to ask your help."

He turned slightly toward them and nodded his large head with its large features and round dark beard. He was seated at an upright piano and added a few notes upon manuscript paper. Then he turned

toward them completely by revolving on the music stool which seemed far too small for him.

Mrs. Bentley said, "We'll only be a very few minutes. This is Julie Forrest, an old friend of mine. This lovely harp has just been given her. Now, how can she go about learning to play it?"

Mr. Hudek, altogether too large for the small room, now stood up and bowed to them both, "How do you do, ladies," he said. He turned his attention entirely upon the harp which Julie held toward him. He took it from her and Julie saw that his large hands held the instrument as if it were made of thinnest glass.

"A true small harp," he said, "and in beautiful condition." His hands seemed hardly to touch it and, as though a wind had risen into music, a singing sound filled the small room. Then he flattened his hand lightly over the strings and said, "A harp that can sing like this one must be well taken care of. I would not like to see it poorly played or played to accompany a cheap little tune."

He glanced speculatively at Mrs. Bentley and Julie. Would they, his questioning look seemed to say, begin to play cheap little tunes upon this fine harp if he once let it out of his hands. But he appeared satisfied. He laid it in its case.

Mrs. Bentley spoke reassuringly to him. "Mr. Hudek," she began, "Julie would like to learn the proper way. She has never played a harp. Could you possibly suggest to her how she ought to begin?"

"How she ought to begin. Well, let me see, one ought to begin with a love for the instrument and," he tapped at his ear, "something here that is a hard thing to teach."

The door in back of Julie opened and closed and someone else came into the room, but as Mr. Hudek was expounding the very first principles of harp playing neither Mrs. Bentley nor Julie dared turn round.

Mr. Hudek looked at Julie attentively for the first time and asked her in a not too hopeful tone, "Can you sing?"

Could she sing? Could she, she wondered. It was one thing to sing for Anne and the Harrisons and even Miss Saunders but without someone to accompany and steady her, it would be almost impossible to sing for Mr. Hudek who played the harp and knew it so well. She remembered her wavering voice when she tried to sing unaccompanied.

"No," she said, "not yet."

"Why, Julie—"

Anne's voice. She turned quickly round. Anne and

Hap stood leaning against the door. Mrs. Bentley glanced at her watch. "I'm afraid it's Hap Harrison's lesson hour," she said.

But Mr. Hudek said, "Yes. He will wait a minute, I am sure."

Hap was embarrassed. "I didn't say a word. I just popped in and thought I'd make less fuss staying on than going out again. And I know you don't like me to come in late no matter what."

"It's all right," Mr. Hudek said. "It's perfectly all right."

"This is my sister, Anne."

"How do you do, Miss Harrison," said Mr. Hudek.

"How do you do, Mr. Hudek," Anne said, pleased at the opportunity to put in a word that was not out of turn. "I just came in time to hear Julie say she doesn't sing. Well—" she began, and stopped seeing Julie's unhappy face, and "Well!" she ended up.

"My dear young lady, what do you mean by *Well?*"

Anne's face was brightest pink.

Mr. Hudek turned from one to the other of the girls. Anne glancing at Mrs. Bentley saw she was trying hard to keep from laughing. Mr. Hudek said to Hap, "Can you explain, Hap?"

Hap said, "Of course Julie can sing. Ask her for 'Under the Greenwood Tree.'"

"I am asking her," said Mr. Hudek, "at this very moment."

Somehow the harp in the proper position for accompaniment had found its way once more into Mr. Hudek's hands. And Julie was facing them all and somehow the words came to her but they were not the words of "Under the Greenwood Tree." Instead she sang

*Alas, my love, you do me wrong,
To cast me off discourteously—*

a bit unsteadily at first, it was true, then more surely, while Mr. Hudek lightly touched the strings playing as if he had been accompanying Julie all her life.

She was singing, she discovered, because she loved to sing and because it was suddenly so easy. The sound of the harp was another voice that made one thing of it all, the words and the music, her voice and the harp.

And who but my lady Greensleeves?

Mr. Hudek ended with a muted broken chord. Then he nodded. "Good," he said, "very good. Perhaps another?"

"Oh, yes," Julie said. It was a very agreeable thing to have Mr. Hudek play the harp for her



singing. She was in a hurry to go on. She felt Mr. Hudek might decide at any moment that he had heard enough of her singing.

The first day of Christmas

she sang, remembering all the words she had learned when the afternoons had been long and lonely,

*my true love sent to me
a partridge in a pear tree.*

The second day of Christmas

*my true love sent to me
two turtle doves
and a partridge in a pear tree.*

The third day of Christmas

*my true love sent to me
three French hens
two turtle doves
and a partridge in a pear tree.*

The fourth day of Christmas

*my true love sent to me
four colly-birds
three French hens
two turtle doves
and a partridge in a pear tree.*

*The fifth day of Christmas
my true love sent to me
five gold rings
four colly-birds
three French hens
two turtle doves
and a partridge in a pear tree.*

Now she took courage and looked at her audience, first Mrs. Bentley, then Anne, then Hap. Something in Hap's face so assured and so much encouraged her she sang the rest of the ballad, through all the twelve days of Christmas, entirely for him.

*The twelfth day of Christmas
my true love sent to me
twelve lords a-leaping
eleven ladies dancing
ten pipers piping
nine drummers drumming
eight maids a-milking
seven swans a-swimming
six geese a-laying
five gold rings
four colly-birds
three French hens
two turtle doves
and a partridge in a pear tree.*

They were all clapping their hands in a pattering hailstorm of sound, Anne applauding longest and loudest. It had been easy to sing and the harp made heavenly music, but seeing their happy faces was better even than listening to herself and to Mr. Hudek.

Mr. Hudek said, "Thank you, Miss Julie. It was a pleasure."

And she said, "Oh, Mr. Hudek, you're the one to be thanked."

"Mrs. Bentley," Mr. Hudek said, "can you arrange a half hour for us tomorrow? I would like to teach Miss Julie enough about her instrument so she can accompany herself. And Hap," he said, "come tomorrow, can you?"

"Of course, Mr. Hudek," he said, "same time?"

Mr. Hudek said yes, same time, and turned back to Julie and took her hand this time and shook it and said once more, "Thank you," and "Be on time, please."

Downstairs, Mrs. Bentley said, "You were fine, Julie. I'd have known it myself but Mr. Hudek's behavior was extraordinary. You cannot imagine how he positively discourages most people."

Mrs. Bentley looked at her file cards. "Tomorrow, Julie, at four, for your first lesson. By the way, Mr.

Hudek doesn't like to be kept waiting. And it's two dollars for the lesson and one dollar for registration."

Two dollars for the lesson and one dollar for registration. She hadn't thought of the money. At least she had not thought it would be so expensive. Three dollars was as much as she spent for half a week's shopping. She stood still thinking about it. But how can I possibly ask Mother for money to pay for—of all things—music lessons which they had not even planned to have. She continued to stand facing Mrs. Bentley who was busy writing a note on a card.

"We're walking your way," Anne came to say. "Are you ready now?"

"I think I'll be staying for a few minutes," Julie said.

"Want us to wait?" she asked Julie.

Julie shook her head. "Thank you, Anne, but I may be quite a bit late coming home."

"Well then, we'll go on," Anne said, "and I'll see you tomorrow." And Hap added, "You know Mr. Hudek does his best to get rid of dead wood, but he's a marvelous teacher when he likes someone. And he was very enthusiastic, for him. Good luck, Julie." Anne and Hap walked to the door.

"There's another thing," Julie said, leaning over the desk toward Mrs. Bentley. She did not quite

know how to tell Mrs. Bentley she had forgotten that music lessons had to be paid for. She could hardly say that after Mrs. Bentley had been so kind as to give her so much time and come up with her and bother to make Mr. Hudek listen.

"What other thing, Julie?" Mrs. Bentley asked, looking up from her writing.

"Mother told me about the nursery and that I used to be left here when I was little," Julie, talking hastily, searching for a way to explain about the money, put it off for a while. "If it isn't too much trouble, I'd like to go up for just a minute." She had promised herself to see it and, besides, alone with Mrs. Bentley, she could lead the conversation round to the question of the expensiveness of lessons. From then on it would be simpler, she thought.

Mrs. Bentley was as pleased with Julie's request as if she had been given a gift of flowers. "Would you really like to? I'll lock your harp away in the closet until we come down again. And we must scrub our hands before we go up. We've twice as many babies as we had then, but perhaps you'll like that. The more the merrier and noisier."

After they had washed their hands, Mrs. Bentley said, "No, this time we go up another staircase. Don't you remember?" She gave Julie a friendly

smile. "Even more noise where we're going than at the music school."

Two dollars, Julie was thinking, would mean two dollars each week, but the dollar for registration must mean for the whole year. Two dollars after the first week would not be so bad as three dollars. All the same she could never ask for it from her mother.

The nursery was square and painted gaily in yellow, and all kinds of toys were ranged in shelves along one wall. And there was the window she remembered, only it did not seem so large now. The window was a series of long French doors and outside them was the terrace. But she had no more time to observe windows and doors for all about her the nursery seemed overflowing with busy babies and toddlers of all sizes and shapes. They paid little attention to Mrs. Bentley and Julie but went soberly about building with blocks and rolling balls and dragging carts.

"Their mothers leave them in the morning, just as you used to be left here, and come for them when their work is over and take them home. They're all very well behaved," Mrs. Bentley glanced at the uniformed nurse who was folding blankets at the end of the room, "or almost all, aren't they, Miss Otis?" And as Miss Otis nodded, Mrs. Bentley took Julie's

arm. "Would you like to see our youngest?" she asked her.

She led Julie to the window. Taffy was very pink, and frankly and steadily stared at Julie.

"His mother is not well and we are trying to find a home for him. She isn't able to take care of him for a time and so meanwhile we have him here during the days at least and show him to likely visitors."

A home for Taffy? She would have loved to take Taffy home with her for as long as he needed to stay.

Mrs. Bentley almost read her thoughts. "Taking care of a baby is a more difficult task than it seems and we must look for a home where Taffy can have a great deal of attention. A much harder thing to find is a mother who is willing to give him up just as soon as his own mother is stronger and able to care for him herself. And that is not easy when one gets attached to so likable a young man."

Miss Otis peered over their shoulders. "He is so sweet and cheerful and he does need someone to play with."

"Yes," Mrs. Bentley sighed, "he does. They all need full-time mothers." That was almost exactly what her mother had said, Julie was thinking.

A ball came rolling to their feet and Ronny, nearly four years old, came running after it.

"Now, Ronny, do you want to play ball with us?"

Ronny was delighted with Mrs. Bentley's truly brilliant suggestion.

"Play ball," he urged, "play ball." He handed the ball to Julie and Julie rolled it back to him.

"Notice the good behavior, Julie," said Mrs. Bentley. "Not one of them is crying. But you should see us here at five or so. Some want to go home on the stroke of five and begin telling us about it. And some hate to leave, and tell us about that. We need a hundred hands then. On a fine day we dress them early and they play on the terrace until their mothers come, but when it rains or it's windy all the dressing goes on at once and then the fun really begins."

A plan began to shape itself in Julie's mind as Miss Otis walked away.

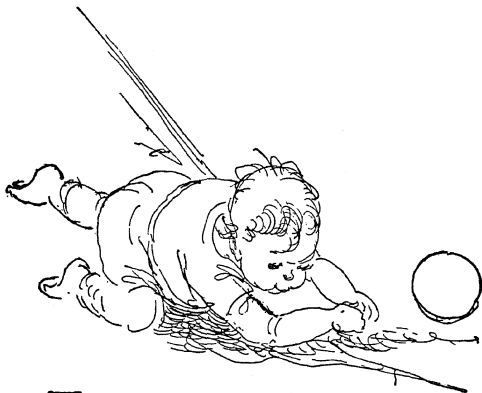
"Mrs. Bentley," she said, not even reconsidering it, "could I be of any help here? I'd love to help dress them. I'm very fond of babies, and I'd be home in time for Mother. She comes at six.

"And, Mrs. Bentley, if I could do that, I mean if you would consider my working here every day, I'd be glad to do it in exchange for a lesson every week—if that's possible. Could you consider it? I'm by myself all afternoon after school and I'm free to come."

Mrs. Bentley was reminded suddenly of Julie's mother, whose face had been just so eager (how many years ago?), who had been so sure it would only be a few months before Jeff would be earning enough so she could stay at home with Julie. He had left them now, obviously. And Julie was worrying about paying for the lessons.

She said, "I'm not sure, Julie, we can do that. There are certain precautions we must take with the very little ones. In any case it could only be the one day that you come for your lesson, you know. Let me see about it, won't you? At any rate, you *must* come tomorrow. Don't think about the money at all. Not at all."





JULIE, holding the black case fondly, hurried home in the soft April afternoon. She could hardly wait to tell her mother. And she had scarcely time to set the table and feed Miss Tidy when her mother was at the door.

"Julie, don't tell me my hat isn't tilted exactly right or both my gloves are on one hand. I've been rushing to get here. Now begin at the beginning."

Julie began but not at the beginning. She began with Mr. Hudek. And went on to Mrs. Bentley who had remembered instantly and had understood everything, and then told about Anne who had said "Well" at exactly the right moment, and Hap who had had to have his lesson postponed on her account. And of the little ones. Would Mrs. Bentley really let her help, did her mother think, even once a week?

"Knowing Mrs. Bentley, I'm sure she will do all she can, Julie."

"If only she would." Julie's eyes suddenly filled with tears and she could not stop herself from crying. "But I'm not a bit sad, Mother," she sobbed, "on the contrary."

"I know. Listen, Julie, do you know these lines?

April, April, laugh thy girlish laughter

Then, the moment after

Weep thy girlish tears . . .

Doesn't it remind you of yourself? I'm sure Mrs. Bentley will let you help if you want to so badly."

It wasn't wanting to help with the little ones that had made her cry. It was that just one more thing was needed and then everything would be perfect. Just being able to tell her father about the harp in Mr. Hudek's hands and its music. Just telling him

that Mr. Hudek had promised to teach her to accompany herself. That was all she wanted. And that would make it perfect.

"Julie, you needn't worry about taking care of the babies to pay for your lessons. Of course you must pay for them. Why, that's what we save money for—to do the things that are important, like music."

"But it isn't for the money alone, Mother. I loved them at once. I would love to help dress them. It's only once a week when I go for my lesson. And the babies do need someone, Mother. They need full-time parents, Mrs. Bentley said. At least they could have me."

* * *

She was at Mrs. Bentley's desk next day long before four.

"Have you thought it over and talked with your mother, Julie?" Mrs. Bentley smiled at her.

"Yes, Mrs. Bentley. I would love to help with the children. And my mother hopes you will let me."

"We'll be very glad to have you if you'll lend a hand the day you come for your lesson. Miss Otis will show you exactly what to do."

It was agreed that after each lesson with Mr. Hudek, and after Julie scrubbed and scrubbed her hands, she would present herself to Miss Otis. It was a fair business arrangement, Mrs. Bentley said,

refusing the three dollars Julie had brought. An hour's work in the nursery would pay for a half-hour music lesson.

* * *

She knew them all the first day, toddlers and mature five-year-olds and the littlest ones, and Taffy. Even while she dressed one of the older ones she kept a sharp eye on Taffy. His large brown eyes followed her about and studied her with unlimited approval.

Once, weeks later, when she was allowed to get Taffy dressed by herself, she took so long over it that Miss Otis came to see.

"Is there something you need, Julie, that I can get for you?"

"No," she said simply, "I've just been holding him."

Miss Otis understood at once. "I love to hold Taffy," she said.

When Mr. Hudek suggested that perhaps Julie could come twice a week for lessons as the June Festival drew nearer, Julie, delighted with the prospect of more music and more time in the nursery, went almost immediately to see Mrs. Bentley.

"Miss Otis says I help quite a bit," she said, "and Mr. Hudek asked me to come Mondays as well as Thursdays."

"But of course you help. I've had wonderful reports."

"If I came every day, not only music days, wouldn't that be so much easier for Miss Otis?"

"Well, Julie, but what about homework and things you must shop for? And two days of helping upstairs are enough to cover the cost of both lessons."

"Homework is always after supper, Mrs. Bentley, and I still do shop for my mother on the way home. And I practice before I come here. I can easily work it in, I know."

Perhaps, Mrs. Bentley considered, Julie wants to crowd her days, for some reason of her own.

"All right, Julie, let's try it."

* * *

Mr. Hudek was patient. Often he did not look patient and his frown inspired terror in most, but now that Julie knew Mr. Hudek she knew that although he frowned deeply and was plunged in gloom when she was slow to learn, his face radiated happiness when she understood and learned quickly.

Now, after four weeks, she could play simple accompaniments for six of the songs she knew. Now, in May, the days made a tight interlocking pattern. There was no time at all to walk lingeringly to the

school corner. No time at all to wait. The afternoons with her father seemed far in the past.

There was only a moment now and again when someone passed by striding along in the way he did and she turned quickly to see. Or when a voice in a conversation she overheard had the sound of his.

And there were the times when the music went well, when she was at her best with Mr. Hudek and thought how pleasant it would be if her father would open the door and come in at this very moment and listen. How she would love to see his astonishment grow as she played.

At East House they became accustomed to seeing her slip into the nursery. On busy days Miss Otis came to depend on her at five o'clock to take care of almost half the children. Taffy made joyous sounds when he caught sight of her and energetically demanded Julie's attention when she turned away to dress someone else.

And in return Taffy was an astonishingly appreciative audience. To him she sang "Men of Harlech," and "The Minstrel Boy," and "Under the Greenwood Tree," and to each he listened as no one would ever listen again, with attention so intense that, exhausted with concentration, he fell asleep.

There was a letter for Julie one morning of early June. It was a small plain envelope that came for her and had only her name and address typed on it. She stood turning it over in her hand.

"Do open it, Julie," her mother said, "and let's get on so we can make the most of this really wonderful summer day in spring. It's early enough for a slow walk to the bus." She waited for Julie and added, "I'll not even be curious."

Julie tore open the envelope and saw his handwriting inside. "Why, it's from Dad."

Dearest Julie,

My very first long afternoon for you tomorrow, Wednesday. I'll be at the old place with much to tell you. We'll do anything and go anywhere you like.

Meantime, love from

Dad

Anywhere you like. Even here, at home with them for dinner and the rest of the evening. A dinner exactly as she had imagined for them, sitting down together at the cherry table. She was glad she had not told her mother about that other afternoon. Now she could see for herself. *Anywhere you like. O wert*

thou in the could could blast. Anywhere you like. Sheltering words. Yellow sun on gray stone. For a moment she shut her eyes and behind her closed lids she saw them. Her mother was saying something in her usual way, something at once perfectly serious and perfectly ridiculous. Then they were all three laughing.

They walked out together, down the four flights, along the sunny street. They walked slowly but Julie's heart was light and gay. She glanced at her mother. And her mother smiled at her.

"Nice day," she said.

But it was much more than that. And all her last small misgivings vanished like dew in sun. When she met him now it would be very different from last time.

"He's been working hard, Mother, you can tell." Julie could not keep from talking about her father any longer as they stood waiting for the bus. Should it be a surprise? Or should she tell her plan? She debated it. In the end she decided to tell.

"Mother, I thought I'd bring him home. May I? For dinner tomorrow night?"

"Wait and see," her mother said. "You may be the one to be taken out to dinner."

But Julie shook her head. "Oh, no, you have to be on hand. Absolutely."

The bus was in sight. Her mother said, "Of course, if you want to."

"We can be waiting when you come and we'll have dinner ready for you. Afterward I thought I would play for both of you."

"Julie, don't count on it too much. If it can't be tomorrow it can be another time."

Perhaps her mother was right. Better not expect too much. Better not. Then if there was going to be a disappointment, it would not be so hard to get over. It had been hard to get over last time. But he definitely said in his letter, Anywhere you like. Besides, there was absolutely no use saying, Don't count on it. You could not help counting on it.

* * *

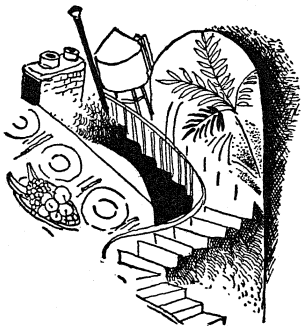
The playing this afternoon surprised and hurt Mr. Hudek. It was full of wrong notes, and once Julie forgot the better part of a ballad she knew as well as her own name.

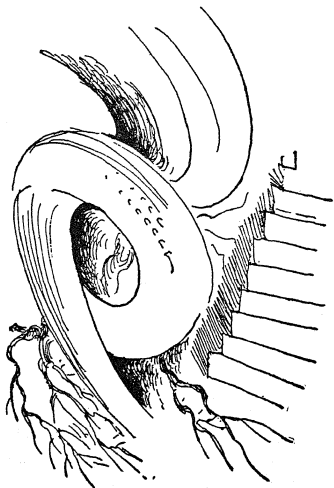
But even Mr. Hudek's sorrowing face did not worry her this afternoon. Of course she knew the ballad. All of this was just because tomorrow was something to be excited about, even when playing

the beloved harp, his beloved harp, and singing with it.

Later when she went up to see Taffy she held him so tightly that he looked at her with outraged dignity and his mouth began to pull down at both corners until she promised to sing for him and not hold him so tightly. Then he generously forgave her and complimented her graciously as usual with a happy sleepy sigh.

"Good night, dearest Taffy," she leaned over him affectionately. Tomorrow she would not see him. "But the day after I'll be here, and I'll tell you about it then. All about us."





SWIFTLY walk o'er the western wave, *Spirit of Night . . .* words sad and musical, urgent words, skimming words. Words for skimming out of a classroom, down a flight of stairs to the corner of a street. Long before she reached the corner she saw him.

Today she felt she was easily able to make the plans for the afternoon and the evening as well. As long as he had left them to her. Anywhere you like, he had written. But first, and before anything else, she must thank him for the miraculous harp and tell him about the music lessons.

"Hello, Dad," she said, "you look better and better."

"Hello, Julie, my girl. So I do. So do you." He was proud of his appearance, she could see, and of her. She was wearing her green coat and it still looked fine and new.

She looked in the direction of the park. "I suppose we ought to get peanuts," she said very steadily, she thought, and "Shall we go to the park?"

"To the park it is. And we don't even have to walk there." He laughed as he said it as though he had a surprise for her and was not altogether sure it was going to be a surprise after all. What could he possibly mean? He took her arm firmly and said, "Look there, across the street."

But she did not see anything, anything at all, across the street. Nothing there, except a shining long car, dark gray, standing at the curb and catching on the chromium of its radiator all the dancing sunlight. Could he possibly mean that car? Could he?

She glanced at him sideways. He was looking straight at it.

"Yours, Dad? Oh, Dad!"

"Well," he said, "not exactly," and laughed again and now there was something else about this that was so incredible that she could hardly walk the rest of the way across the street. For she could see someone inside the car. Someone smiling at her. *Who is that?* And all the day-long and yesterday-long happiness that had spread and been a constant warm glow inside of her began to ebb down, down, down.

Her father was opening the front door of the car and her father was saying just as if it were an ordinary everyday thing to be introducing her to a lady in a car, a lady he knew and she did not, "Julie, my girl, here's someone I want you to meet. It's Mrs. Ridgely. No doubt she'll want you to call her Leslie. It was Leslie who sent you the harp."

The lady named Leslie leaned forward. There was a sparkle of jeweled hand as she held it toward Julie.

"Hello, Julie, I know everything about you. We're not strangers. Come in, we'll all sit in front."

"Hello," said Julie. And Dad stood holding the door, looking at her and waiting, the sun on his smooth bright hair dazzling her, blurring his features.

All the day long and yesterday she had planned how this would be, the first long meeting when he'd have hundreds of things to tell her. It was going to be different from last time because now she understood that he had really been waiting to tell her something important. She had planned to listen to him, quietly happy, knowing almost exactly what he would say but listening intently nevertheless, hearing about the things he had been doing and how well everything was going at last. And then he'd have come home with her. And for the last, for the very last surprise she would have played for him on his harp. But it wasn't his harp, it was *hers*.

Instead here was Mrs. Ridgely. Leslie, he called her. A stranger who had sent her a harp, a stranger who had nothing to do with their own three lives. Had she?

No, she could not sit in front or in back or anywhere with them. While he held open the car door she wondered how she could say that she could not go with them. She began to tell them, listening to herself as though the words came from a long distance away, making themselves up with an effort, just filling in time as long as they were waiting and she had to say something.

"I can't come with you because I've already

promised to be somewhere else this afternoon. I'd forgotten about it and I'll have to go now."

He looked disappointed. "Nothing is that important, Julie. And what's the hurry?"

She listened to the almost forgotten, the old and terrible morning words, *what's the hurry?* She had heard them so many times, so many dreadful times.

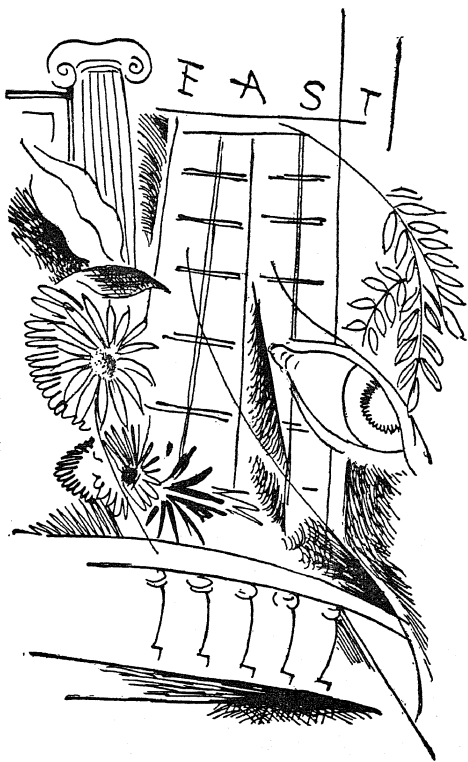
"I really must." She did not look at Mrs. Ridgely as she turned away. She crossed the street and walked past the school homeward. It surprised her most that her legs could move just as usual, just as though nothing had happened.

Miss Willoughby, going home, passed her and called, "Good afternoon, Julie," and stared in disbelief at Julie looking straight at her and not seeing her. And then Miss Willoughby saw a man getting into the long gray car across the way and slamming the door shut and, recognizing him, felt the blood rushing to her face.

Miss Willoughby made a helpless small gesture with one hand as though she were hailing a cab that she could see had no intention of stopping for her.

* * *

At East House everything was changeless. The warm late spring air entered at every open window. The street noises filtering in seemed far away. East



House lived its own measured calm life. You could not bring anything disturbing or disagreeable here. You could not, Julie told herself.

Ronny looked up cheerfully when she came in and Polly and Edith clustered round her. She was pleased that they saw nothing different about her whatever. Taffy waved to her and made noble and unavailing efforts to raise himself. She leaned over him, and his face that had been solemn became wreathed in smiles. He gave her a tremendous welcome, full of laughs and gurgles, and Julie thought, Well, at least I can be useful here. Taffy needs me. And she extended a forefinger and he clung to it with all his young might, and slowly, slowly lifted himself fully two inches.

"Why, Taffy!" Miss Otis coming by noticed that Julie was laughing and that her eyes were very bright. It cheered things up immensely to have Julie about, Miss Otis always thought. And children liked young people. It was a great mistake to have elderly people, with long faces, taking care of the little babies. Elderly people had all sorts of troubles of their own and elderly people were just too far away from their own childhood to remember how they used to like being played with. Julie, for example, took them seriously. That was right. She talked to them in just the right sober way, just as

they talked to each other. They understood Julie and Julie never made fun of them. That was very important. Yet when they wanted to laugh, why she did not mind a bit laughing with them. Miss Otis thoroughly approved of Julie.

Julie seemed to be so happy with Taffy this afternoon. She forgot everyone else, and Taffy instead of crying at five o'clock to be picked up was content to have Julie talk to him.

In an hour, Julie kept thinking, her mother would be coming home but tonight she would have liked to stay on with Miss Otis who lived at East House. She would have liked never to have to go home, never to have to explain about the afternoon. But when the babies had all been given to their mothers, Miss Otis briskly asked, "Ready, Julie?" and Julie had to go, however slowly and unwillingly.

Julie, arriving home, stood below waiting for her mother. It would be easier to go upstairs, she felt, if she waited to go up with her. Their new home had seemed only a temporary place, up to now. Now, looking into the dimly lit doorway, she wondered for how many years it might have to be their home.

The shadows of passers-by were longer now and the air was cooler. An occasional light went on. Her mother was going to be late tonight. Better go upstairs and get things going. And set the table. There

was no use putting it off. And when her mother came the whole story would have to be told, the whole story, because it was useless to hide anything from her mother. Anything at all.

She climbed up slowly and turned the key in the lock, her fingers struggling with its stubbornness. Then opening the door she saw that the lamp was on and the table set for them both. She stopped in the doorway. Her mother looked round from the electric stove where she was preparing their supper.

"Mother! I've been waiting and waiting below."

"Have you? I came home early, Julie."

"Are you all right, Mother?"

"Of course I am." Her mother came toward her. Her hair was loosely gathered at the back of her neck. It made her look young and comfortable and dressed up all at the same time. Julie dropped into the wing chair.

"Aren't you going to take your hat off?" her mother asked.

"Oh, yes." She took off her beret and set about washing her hands.

In the mirror of the medicine chest she examined her face closely. Her mother, too, had seen no great difference in her. And she had not really expected

him to come back with her because the table was set for only two, as usual.

"First, would you like some grapefruit juice or tomato, Julie?"

Of course her mother was playing a game of pretending she did not remember what day this was to have been, but there was no use pretending. She could not begin to eat at all.

"I'm not a bit hungry, Mother. Will you mind if I don't have anything?"

"No, I won't mind too much, but perhaps you will want something in a little while. I'll keep things warm."

Julie sat on her bed. Her mother turned the heat low on the stove then came to sit beside her.

"Tell me, Julie, will you?"

"I didn't spend the afternoon with him," Julie said slowly. "I've just come from East House."

"Then he didn't come for you, after all."

"Oh, yes, Mother, he came."

"He came?" She looked puzzled. "Let me see now. He came but you didn't go with him as you'd planned. Was it," she hesitated a moment, "was it because he brought someone with him?"

"Yes, Mother. How did you know?"

"I guessed," her mother said. "I didn't know. I'm sorry, Julie, it had to happen this way. If I'd known he meant to introduce you so soon, perhaps I could have made it easier for you, prepared you at least. He wrote me, a week or so ago, about Mrs. Ridgely. I'll tell you all he told me in his letter."

A stranger who had nothing to do with their own three lives. Had she? she had wondered.

"Mrs. Ridgely is a widow. She has been carrying on alone the business her husband established—a business in musical instruments and radios and records. Some weeks ago Jeff became manager of a new music department there." She took a deep breath. "Julie, he is very fond of her. He suggested that the simplest way for all of us would be divorce, and that then he would be free to marry her. And, Julie, he hoped you would not mind too much and would try to think of him as remaining exactly the same toward you. I think he wanted to tell you that himself today."

Divorce, did her mother say? Divorce. How she hated the word. It was a word for black bold headlines in the picture newspapers and a word they had whispered when Marcia Gordon had first come to their school. Her parents are *divorced*, someone had told her, and she spends all week with her mother and Sunday with her father. Don't you think that's

funny? And on the radio the gossipers were always talking about divorce. A cheap and coarse word. Divorce. Coarse. A coarse divorce. Her own family. Her own father.

"I won't ask you to eat all your supper, Julie, but just make an effort, and wait, Julie, don't try to make it clear yet. Not yet. Let's see. We haven't even time to be unhappy or angry about it. We must make our plans, now that we know exactly how it stands with us as a family. And you can't keep on feeling way down, Julie. Tell me something about East House."

You could not bring anything disturbing or disagreeable to East House. Or to conversation about it. It stood alone, serene, a haven.

"Do tell me about Taffy," her mother said, "do, Julie." Tonight her mother's voice was tender and her mouth curved into a frequent smile, but her eyes were large and dark as if she were concentrating upon something she wanted to see clearly.

Julie made a tremendous effort to turn her thoughts away from her father and Mrs. Ridgely and the word, divorce, and the thing itself. At last she said, "Taffy can almost sit up, Mother."

They were sitting at the table and Julie lifted up a spoonful of creamy hot soup and ate it and took up another.

"And he loves best of all to hear 'Charlie Is My Darling,' except I sing it, 'Taffy Is My Darling.'" Julie was talking quickly, the thought of Taffy beginning to push out the other thought the least bit.

"Really? Taffy is *my* darling, too, Julie. You don't know how grateful I am to him for making you laugh so often, and to Mrs. Bentley for arranging the music, and to Mr. Hudek."

Julie put down her spoon into an empty soup dish.

"And while I am in a grateful frame of mind, Julie, I'll tell you how particularly grateful I am to you for being so understanding and so thoroughly dependable. You help me tremendously, Julie, being the way you are. And as a reward for being so helpful, Julie, take the trouble to undo the box over there, inside the closet." But her mother went to get it and handed it to her while Miss Tidy curiously sniffed.

Julie slowly undid the string. Any other time she would have been unable to suppress her curiosity, but now there was too much else getting in the way of it.

From the first glimpse of it she knew it was enchanting. It was black and it was velvet and it was a dress someone never having seen her had nevertheless designed especially for Julie.

"Let me see it on you, Julie. That really would please me." Her mother lifted her head high as if to shake off the burden of all that perplexed her.

Julie put on the slender black sheath with its dainty bright green touches of ribbon on sleeves and neckline and looked into the mirror. It was a halfway mirror so she stood on a chair after she had seen the top half.

"We'll brush your hair loose for the Festival, I think," her mother said, "and you can tie a green ribbon under your hair. Let's try it now."

Marcia Gordon was a quiet girl. She did not have many friends. One Saturday afternoon Julie had met her with her mother in the park. They had had a long walk and talk. Marcia's mother was pretty and seemed very interested in the girls' conversation and loved to laugh. They'd had a lovely time in spite of the divorce. Divorce. It had almost begun to have a familiar sound. And now Marcia was a good friend of hers.

"You think of every last little thing, Mother. I wish, somehow, you could come. Can't you possibly?"

"The Festival will be one time that you'll have lots of company without me. And of course I'll see you almost immediately afterward."

Julie standing on the chair held up her hands as if she were holding her harp. Suddenly she dropped them to her sides.

"Mother, I completely forgot. I can't play the harp at the Festival. I'm going to have to return it."

"What in the world are you talking about?"

"Dad didn't give me the harp. It was *hers* and I want to return it to her."

"Julie, come down." Her mother's voice was most matter-of-fact. "You're in danger of making a speech. Perhaps a noble one. I know it's a great temptation to make speeches when one gets up on a chair. Now, listen, Julie. Our lives are going to be a little different from most. We'll have to assume that to start with."

Julie climbed down.

"We can't shake them off completely," her mother said, "ever, even if we should want to. Jeff is your father. You can't change that. You'll want to see him. Yes, you will, later on. And he'll want to see you. You may even come to be friends with Mrs. Ridgely. You'll still be my daughter. Nothing can change that either. And, Julie, dear, your loyalty to me doesn't have to exclude being friendly to them." She tugged at Julie's waistline. "There, it's a beautiful fit," she said. "Does it feel a bit too snug?"

"No, not a bit."

"About the harp. I'm sure it would make a person feel miserable to have so generous a gift rejected. I think I can count on you, Julie, to be well-behaved and not make anyone miserable."

Julie began taking off the dress. "I won't return it if you think I shouldn't. It isn't that I want to return it, but I don't like to accept a gift from someone who's broken up our family."

"I'm not sure a family can be broken up that way, Julie. The truth is that for a long time Jeff had been restless and unhappy and had wanted to leave. I can see it now though I didn't at first."

Her mother took the dress from Julie and hung it on a hanger and placed it in the closet.

"Let's sit down now, and go on with our supper. It's late enough. And Julie," she said, beginning to serve her out of a steaming casserole, "we're going on a trip next Saturday, you and I. You'll have to let everything else go, even rehearsal for the Festival, even Taffy if you were planning to see him. Perhaps Anne would care for Miss Tidy overnight. We're going to the country."

"Of course Anne will take care of Miss Tidy. Where are we going?"

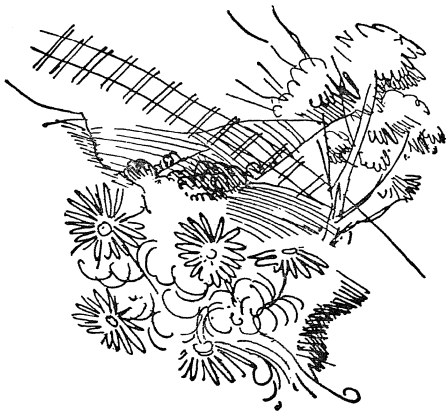
"To a little place called Vernal Bank."

Julie had always longed to see it. She wished it had come at a time when her heart was not so heavy. "Have you heard from the family?"

"No, I haven't, but I've things to attend to in Vernal Bank, so I thought I'd take Saturday morning off from the office. I've always wanted you to see it, besides. We'll make an early start and stay over until Sunday evening."

Julie began slowly to eat.

Vernal Bank. Long thick grass on a sloping bank above a curving river.



POUNDAROUND. . . Poundaround. . .
 Poundaround. . . You don't know how ugly I
 can be, said the city, becoming uglier and uglier
 and running alongside the train. Poundaround-pound-
 around-poundaround. . . The wheels were going
 round faster now, trying hard to escape the ugliness,

the dirtiness, the heaped-up rubble and gashes of the city's outskirts. And now the ugliness began to shrink and crawl away but the train ran fast and breathlessly for a long time. . . .

Now all along the railroad on either side banks of daisies lighted the way. Now, beyond and on the right were gently rolling hills and handkerchief squares of furrowed land, bright yellow and green, and everywhere the pale running flame, now and again deepening to red, of ramblers. The daisies covered the crests of hills and dusted the valleys, but the ramblers boldly climbed on white porches and on stone walls, along sagging fences and up the sides of barns.

When you were getting well after you had been sick you sat like a cat blinking in the sun. When you were eleven you had the measles. Afterward you wanted to sit like a cat in the sun and you were only half-alive yet, and did not want to do anything. And now too you felt a little like that, wanting to sit in the train and watch out of the window and not wanting to think, hearing only the poundaround of the wheels.

Along the Hudson Valley the rolling hills humped themselves into mountains on either side of the river, and every so often there was a dip between the hills

and in the distances were mountains rising behind mountains, losing themselves in purples and smoky blues and green. Green, every delicate spring-into-summer shade, green everywhere.

Watching the distant smoky-blue mountains for a long while it was as though you had sat in the sun enough and were taking a long catlike stretch and beginning gradually to feel stronger and forgetting, a little at a time, what it was that had made you want to sit and not think and listen only to the poundaround of the wheels. . . .

"Julie, what do you think Vernal Bank looks like? Describe what you see when you think of it and I'll tell you how close you've come."

"I think of two things. One is a little village street with all the houses white on both sides of it and wide lawns with great sycamores or maples, I think maples, perhaps, and a clock tower at the end of the street. And near by a river and someone rowing a boat and tying up at a sloping bank covered with thick long grass. And the other is a big house about like the Harrisons' across the river. That would be Uncle Roger's house. With a neat small farm laid out in squares in front of it."

"You're a long way from home, Julie," her mother said. "Vernal Bank is an intersection of two

country roads, a general store almost hidden by a long lilac hedge, a creek with a rough little bridge over it, more lilacs, and a black walnut grove. There are fifteen minutes of fast riding on a fairly good road through a pine wood after the walnut grove. Then there's our house."

"It sounds better your way," Julie said.

"It does sound nice, doesn't it?" She turned to Julie, surprise in her voice, as if she herself had made the discovery this moment. "I didn't know until I described it for you how clear it is in my mind. It may be different, of course, now. But I was born there and I lived there for eighteen years. I suppose I should remember it."

That was about when Jeffrey Forrest would have made his appearance. But Julie did not want to think of him just now. It would give her that half-alive feeling again like the cat blinking in the sun.

"Shall I tell you how I came to leave Vernal Bank, Julie? I don't think I ever told you the story."

She would not have to listen too closely and she could watch the sunny untroubled sky through the avenues made by the hills dipping down and see the farmhouses shouldering into the hills.

"You never did, Mother."

"My mother, Grandmother Berwick, wasn't well

that winter. We worried about her. One morning she just couldn't get up from bed. There'd been a heavy snowstorm with all the wires down. Roger, as it happened, had left before daylight and so, as soon as I could I took the Dodge and I started off for the doctor. Bridger, where Dr. Wentworth lived, is about ten miles from our house. There's a long winding driveway at the Wentworth place and when I got there his son, David, was working hard to clear it of the piled-up snow. A friend of his was helping him. 'This is Jeff Forrest,' David said, 'up here with me for the holidays.'"

Julie saw them in the snow-heaped driveway, the pale wintry sun making purple shadows under the heavy-laden trees. A young girl reached out her hand and shook a young man's hand. That was the beginning.

She had not wanted to listen but now she did not mind listening. They were people in a story, people she hardly knew. . . .

"Jeff went on clearing the driveway and David and I went in together and I talked with Dr. Wentworth who immediately got into his car and drove out to see Grandmother Berwick. And of course she had got out of bed by the time he arrived and did not mind telling Dr. Wentworth sharply that he had

made an unnecessary trip and was probably needed lots worse elsewhere.

“David drove along with me on the way back and asked if I’d go with him to the Christmas dance. I must tell you, Julie, that in a little place like Vernal Bank other people decide things for you sometimes. For instance, everyone assumed that one day David and I were going to be married. He’d always choose me for a partner at school dances and picnics, all through our childhood and at high school too.”

She had not thought she wanted to listen. Yet she was leaning close to hear what her mother was saying. If her mother had married David she would not have been Julie. She would not have been, in fact.

“Didn’t you want to marry him?” She hoped her mother would say she did not. She hoped her mother would not say she was sorry because of what had happened since. Because then—then what about me, squirrel Julie? Yet her mother *hadn’t* married David Wentworth, had she? There was no need to worry. She, Julie, was right here. It was only that she had to know if her mother was sorry.

“It was a very short meeting with Jeff,” her mother said. “I remember he said, ‘It’s cold, prodigiously cold, for a city dweller like me.’ I don’t

remember his saying anything else except that we laughed over something. I was in a great hurry, of course, but I remember thinking, in an odd, definite way, that I knew then, better than ever, that I would never marry David." She looked at Julie. "Having you, Julie, I'm not sorry."

And there she had said it, simply, in six words, all that Julie wanted to know.

Julie, ever so slightly, moved closer to her mother. And because it was warm and sheltering knowledge she could not yet let the subject go. Now she had changed from a half-awake cat to a wide-awake one ready to pounce upon words, waiting catlike for a scrap of conversation that had occurred years before.

"Julie, through all the discouraging years, there was one thing I could tell myself that would help me to see things through. Can you guess what it was?"

Yes, she could guess, but it was better to hear her mother say it. "Tell me."

"I have Julie, I would say."

"There must have been many times when you were angry with me—"

Her mother looked at her and laughed. "Oh, many times. I've even spanked you, and hard, but there was never a moment I did not thank my stars I had you."

It was as though you were reading a story. You knew what happened because you had looked at the last page but you pretended not to know and went on reading, and the surprise of it was there all the same.

"There is so much you have of Jeff. All the best of him. A warm heart and a curiosity about all sorts of things and you have his gift of music and you look like him and have his coppery-gold hair."

"Did you go to the dance, Mother?"

"Oh, yes, I was quick to accept David's invitation but it had very little to do with David. Of course he brought Jeff with him."

An enormous room with heavy rafters exposed. Julie saw it clearly. It was not too brightly lit and the long shadows danced on the walls and roof. In a corner the musicians busily played all evening. Who is that with Elisabeth Berwick? a young girl asked. Why, that's a friend of David Wentworth's. His name is Jeffrey Forrest. Jeffrey's in luck, her young man said. I'd say Elisabeth was, said the girl. Perhaps it had been that way.

Her mother said, "Jeff told me he had just discovered America, in spite of what the textbooks said, and that cities were graveyards and that the country was the only place a person could be alive in.

"There wasn't much left of the Christmas vacation and he was going back to school with David. There were many letters. He was going to leave college at the end of the second year. He wanted to do something to earn money quickly and marry me and take me to New York for a year or so. Then we'd come back to live in Vernal Bank. Oh yes, and build a new house."

Page after page, the story went on, and every step of it came a step closer to her, Julie.

"We were married in the early spring but it was 1930 when jobs were scarce and we thought we would live at home in Vernal Bank until things improved.

"Then Jeff who had so suddenly begun to love the country became just as suddenly tired of it. The more restful the landscape, he began to say, the more restless he became. Besides, Uncle Roger and Jeff didn't quite take to each other. And Jeff kept getting more and more restless.

"Mother died that same year and we decided to try our luck in New York. Jeff had some ideas for songs. He felt sure he could sell them."

Luck-in-New-York, the train wheels ponderously repeated, luck-in-New-York.

"Roger couldn't understand it at all. The farm

was large and productive. Jeff could have helped manage the place and improve it and make trips to town to market the produce. If Jeff were interested. But he wasn't. And then in New York City you were born."

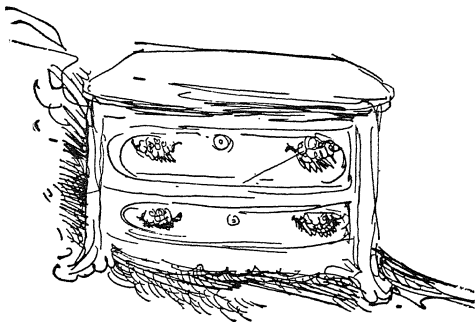
To Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Forrest of New York City, a daughter, named Julie.

"Did you never go back?"

"Yes, twice, and both times alone. Jeff didn't get on with Roger, as I told you, and it was always hard for me to leave you when you were little. Later on, working all week, there were only the week ends for us to be together, but Vernal Bank was often in my mind. I hardly ever spoke of it to you because I was never quite ready, before, to explain about us all to you."

Her mother had not wanted to speak of the old quarrels. Not while Jeff was with them. Not until now when they knew where they stood as a family, as she had said.

"The house is lovely. At least it used to be. I don't know what's happened to it since. My mother liked furniture made in the old, unhurried way, with great care and of fine wood. You know the kind of things they are from seeing them in our own little apartment. Imagine a house full of them."



Mrs. Aspinwall had loved the walnut chest at once.

"Uncle Roger, I must say, was very generous. He knew how much I cared about Mother's furniture and china. When we left he told me he'd set it all aside for me."

"Did Grandmother Berwick leave the house to Uncle Roger, then?"

"No, she left the house to us both, to Roger and to me, equally."

"So we still own part of a house, at least, Mother."

"No, Julie, when Jeff and I decided to go to the

city, Uncle Roger offered to buy our share of it. There would not have to be an accounting then at the end of each year, nor would he have to consult us about changes, and no worrying for us about things that were remote from us by that time. He paid us generously.

"Jeff often forgot that generous gesture and felt we should have continued to share the income though it was Roger who spent long winter nights solving farm problems. But while that money lasted, Julie, we had the happiest times. You were very little then. You couldn't possibly remember."

Yes, she could. The white bonnet. All three laughing.

It was a long ride, but it did not seem so to Julie.

Flowing landscape and sunny sky. Steady low rhythm of train wheels, accompaniment to the story of a girl not much older than herself, a story that ended with herself or did not end but went on, like the flowing landscape, changing and changeless, spring after spring. It made a pattern, a continuing pattern, shadowy and bright, dark and sunny, woven as tightly as one of Grandmother Berwick's home-spuns.

The train pulled in at Poughkeepsie and they gathered up the two small suitcases they had taken

with them. Minutes after they had been walking on the huge station platform, Julie's legs felt as if they were still riding.

They walked up the long flight of stairs to the waiting room.

"Well, I hope I recognize them. And they recognize me." They looked out of the waiting room doors into the street. "Let's see, it might be the Dodge. Anything is possible, even the tractor. Julie, I believe I see Uncle Roger's Mary Ellen."

"Elisabeth."

"Mary Ellen."

"And Julie!" Aunt Mary Ellen said. "Well, it's been a long time. Roger's haying this afternoon and couldn't leave the men. We've had so much rain we have to do what we can when we can." She had been taking long glances at them both but especially at Julie. Julie was almost as tall as her aunt, a tall thin woman with bright blue eyes.

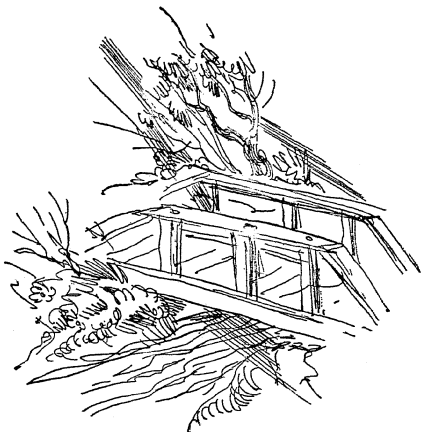
Aunt Mary Ellen was wearing a navy blue suit with a navy blue straw hat that had a cherry red velvet bow in front. The care with which she was dressed surprised Julie. Somehow Julie had expected her aunt to appear in a checked apron and to have hair tightly drawn back from a sunburned face.

"Now, let's get right back on the place," Aunt

Mary Ellen said briskly. "Roger will be looking for us."

They walked from the station. A short distance away on the curved parking space her aunt stopped before a half-ton truck. She climbed up into the driver's seat nimbly and asked them to come in on the other side.

"The car's burned out a bearing," she offered in brief explanation of the truck and started up with a sputter of motor. "It'll be ready any minute now. Sam's going over it right now." Then, "You haven't changed much, Elisabeth," she said, and after that riveted her attention on the road.



THERE were the crossroads, the creek and its bridge, the old lilac hedge and the fast drive on the pretty fair road through a pine wood, then the house. Just as her mother had described them all. But the house! She had imagined the Harrison house

to be like it, she remembered, but the Harrison house could have slipped unnoticed into a wing of Uncle Roger's house.

There was a three-step roof and, of course, it would have an attic. She could see the fanlight window. There was a front porch and another house behind this house. She guessed it was the barn. Perhaps the house did need a coat of paint but the vines—were they honeysuckle?—were thick and climbing tall and the windows had small square panes and blue-green shutters. It was a house to wander about in and get lost in. She loved the house and could not take her eyes from it. All of the babies of East House Nursery could play on one corner of the wide lawn and have more room than on the whole nursery terrace.

They walked up the three steps of the porch. Julie had had this feeling before. When was it? The memory haunted her until she remembered. It was the day she had come to East House with her harp. She had never been here before, yet now in Uncle Roger's house she had the same end-of-a-journey and coming-home feeling again.

"Your mother knows her way around here but I'll go on ahead, Julie, to show you." They went

inside, Aunt Mary Ellen leading and looking back to see that Julie was following.

It was hushed and cool. Julie noticed first that there were cupboards built into the walls and a deep window seat and a heavenly smell. What was it? Peonies, she thought. She looked about her at the furniture. But the sun had been so bright outdoors and the house was so dim with its pulled-down shades, Julie could see very little.

Aunt Mary Ellen took them to their room. It was small, and hot now they were upstairs under the eaves. The floor was painted pumpkin color and the white curtains were stiffly starched and ruffled. There was a white painted metal bed with a round rag rug laid at one side of it and a dark walnut dresser with a mirror over it. These were all the furnishings except for one wonderful thing. A large pitcher full of peonies was on a little washstand. And the six pale pink peonies filled the whole house with their perfume.

"I'll leave you here," Aunt Mary Ellen said, "to get comfortable. I'll be seeing about Roger. And there are a few things on the stove I'll have to look after."

From the window Julie could see the creek con-

tinuing in curves away from the house and through the fields. And far away were the haying horses and wagon outlined against the deep blue sky. The tall figure would be Uncle Roger. Two men were working with him.

For the rest of her life the heavy sweetness of peonies would remind her of the white pitcherful of them in a small hot bedroom overlooking a winding creek.

On the bed two freshly laundered sheets, two pillow slips, a folded cotton blanket and two towels were neatly laid.

Her mother had hardly done more than take off her jacket. She had at once gone downstairs to help Mary Ellen with the preparation of dinner.

She looked out of the window a long time, long enough to learn the view so she could see it behind closed lids. Then she went downstairs and found her way to the kitchen. It was a large square room with the sun streaming in. Already the screens were in the windows. A big stove, with an imposing superstructure of pipes and boiler, stood in the very center of the room and gave off waves of heat. Even today the heat of it was making her drowsy. How could Aunt Mary Ellen stand it, she wondered, on not summer days.

In front of the stove exactly where it was least sensible for a cat to sleep there lay a tawny tomcat on the polished green and white linoleum.

"Get up, Tom, out of the way," Aunt Mary Ellen told him. "He does love the sun and the stove," she said. "He's a lazy old fellow except when he's after mice. Why, one day he caught seven. Seven good-sized mice, right around the back porch. Come in, Julie, have some milk if you want it."

"No, thank you, Aunt Mary Ellen." The picture of their kitchen at home, a made-over closet with a tiny window in it, came to her mind. She imagined her aunt looking into it and she imagined describing the scene to Anne. My aunt was aghast, she would probably have to say.

She had heard her father speak of her mother's rich relatives in Vernal Bank but there was no sign of riches here. It looked as if all the work in the kitchen was done by the capable hands of Aunt Mary Ellen, and no one else.

There was the sound of shoes being scraped on a mat and Uncle Roger in overalls and a raveling straw hat came in. Unmistakably he was Uncle Roger for his face was like a crude charcoal drawing of her mother's, larger featured, rougher in outline.

They're my family, Julie thought. It was pleasant

to have discovered a larger family than she had known before.

"Well now, how are you, Elisabeth?" her brother asked.

"Fine, Roger. You look well yourself."

"I'm all right for an old man."

"When did you get to be an old man?"

Her mother had seen them only twice since she had left her childhood home; both times had been many years ago. Since then there had been only a yearly letter from one to the other at Christmas time. Her mother must have changed a little in these years and Uncle Roger and his wife must also have changed somewhat. Yet all three seemed to take each other for granted. It might have been days or weeks instead of years ago that they had parted. It was only when her uncle looked at Julie that he studied her with some interest.

"That's a big girl you've got there, Elisabeth." He came to her and shook her hand.

Not a question about her father came from either her aunt or uncle.

* * *

Most of the makings of their dinner had been growing in the garden an hour before. On the table there were deep bowls of peas and carrots, an im-

mense string bean salad, and a huge raspberry pie.

For the hundredth time, Julie wondered what had brought them here.

Uncle Roger, too, had been wondering, it appeared, about his sister's visit and as soon as his coffee was served, he inquired bluntly, "Well now, Elisabeth, what brings you to Vernal Bank?"

She was as direct as he. "I've been thinking I'd like to pick up some of Mother's old things, some furniture and some china, too, perhaps."

Julie could not believe her ears. Pick up old things? When they had only recently moved into a single room from a four-room apartment? And this furniture? But were these the lovely things her mother meant? They did not seem at all like the few they had at home. These were more like the furniture they saw as they leafed through the mail-order catalogues her mother received every so often. What would she do with these?

"Well," said Uncle Roger, "since we bought this new furniture, I've stored away all Mother's things in the attic. I thought you might want them some day. They're getting to be real antiques." He looked round with some pride at the dining-room furniture. "As for us, we like the new things, Mary Ellen and I."

Her mother said, "If it isn't too much trouble,

Roger, I'd like to show the old things to Julie, and I'd like to look at them myself."

"Come on," Uncle Roger said, "have a look."

Her mother began to go up the stairs, then turned to her brother.

"The organ's still there, isn't it? I've been looking forward to showing it to Julie."

Her brother nodded. "Still here."

"We'll only be a minute." Her mother came down the stairs again and took Julie into the parlor. It was a room at the right of the staircase and the door had been shut, but even here the peonies pervaded the air and their perfume seemed suspended in it so that she and her mother moved in damp sweetness. The small bellows organ stood centered against the longest wall.

Julie saw all of the parlor at once as in a photograph, the six horsehair-covered carved chairs, the wallpaper with its single rose alternating with a small wreath of forget-me-nots, the Brussels carpet with its large design of full-blown red roses.

"I've spent long pleasant hours in here," her mother told Julie. For the first time since they'd come her mother looked about her as if this was once her home. And in the next sentence there was the reason. "It's exactly the same. Nothing's been

moved an inch. Sit here, Julie, I've often imagined this room with you here playing the organ."

"Do you suppose I can? I'd love to try."

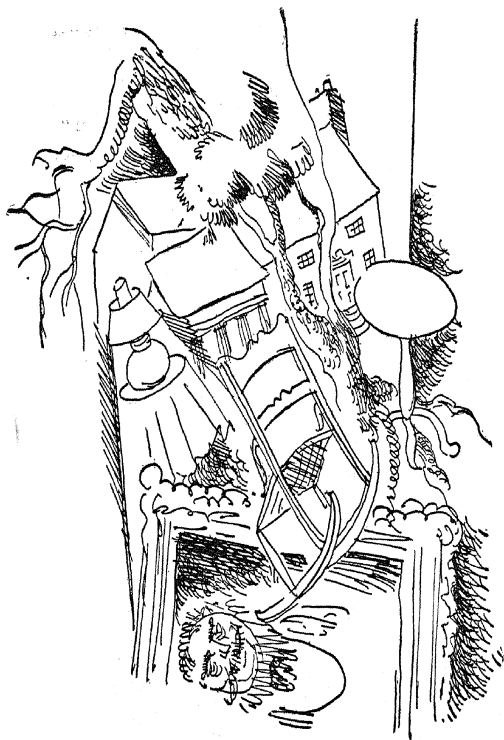
"Of course. It's like a piano except for these." Her mother arranged the stops. "And pump the air with your feet, like our old sewing machine."

Julie pumped and her fingers slid into their places for the Bach "C Major Prelude." A great airy sound that made her start wheezed out at first but immediately she learned the trick of it. Touching the keys, knowing another young girl had years ago played here, she glanced sideways at her mother as she played the "Prelude" through. Again it was changing and again it was changeless. She was playing now but it was the same as it had been then. Almost the same. A little later, that was all.

* * *

The attic stairs were as tidy and scrubbed-looking as the rest of the house. An attic, Julie had always imagined, was a place for cobwebs and dust, but it was just as clean here as in the other downstairs rooms. The only difference was that instead of furniture set out as it should be, all of it was piled neatly one upon the other.

Now Julie saw that these things were different



from the furniture in the dining room and bedrooms. These things were like the few they had in New York. Mother looked carefully at them, not saying much but occasionally recognizing something that she associated with a particular room.

"My bedroom things," she said. "See, Julie." She showed her a narrow spool bed of pine and a washstand to match. "And here's our kitchen dresser."

"Mother, this looks like the little table we had next to the sofa at home before we moved."

"Of course it does. It's a twin sister of the other," said her mother. "Feel the smoothness of it. It's cherry."

She turned to her brother who stood, head bent under the low rafters, fingering a candle mold. "Roger, I'd love to have it all, every bit of it just as it is, but I know you'll want some of it too. There are things out of your own room here. This is your bed, isn't it? You must feel attached to many of these as I do. Will you let me take half, anyway, Roger?"

"Mother gave it to you, Elisabeth, every stick of her furniture. She said it was yours and it is yours. I don't have any use for it, especially as we've got the new things. These are just collecting dust up here, anyway. If you want them, they're yours, and if you don't, they're yours anyway and that goes for

the money I get for them if you want me to sell them for you. But it'd suit me better if you'd have the sense to have your own things instead of his."

He meant her father, Julie guessed. It was the first time he had mentioned him, even indirectly. She felt suddenly as though her face had been sharply flicked by a hand.

"Well, thank you, Roger."

"Sam Steuben runs a big truck now. He'll cart them off for you. Crate 'em and express them to you."

"I don't know where to send them yet. I'll let you know, Roger."

* * *

After supper when the dishes were done, they sat on the back porch. Julie and her mother on a wood settle and Uncle Roger and Aunt Mary Ellen on wicker rockers.

Over the faraway hills a light blue haze settled. The swifts flew low and called to each other, dipping into the creek and winging upward, rapid wings beating. Her aunt's cat, Tom, sauntered out of the house and stood watching the birds longingly. Out of the barn they flew and swooped over Tom like dive bombers, then soared high into the air.

"They're laughing at you, Tom," Aunt Mary

Ellen said, as Tom made short ineffectual leaps at them.

It's sure enough spring, her father had said, how long ago? If you listen sharp on a day like this you can hear the grass grow. Long ago, and yet it was still the same spring. Her mother had been right. She wasn't angry any more. Not even with Mrs. Ridgely. How far away they seemed, as if with the miles there were between them, she had separated herself from the hurting thought of them. Try as she might she could not begin to imagine her father here. It seemed natural for him to be in the city. And for Mrs. Ridgely too. Just as it seemed natural for her mother and herself to be here, looking out over the blue hills.

She sat up straight. Now she knew what Hap had meant. She felt exactly the same way. She was a country person too.

"Nelson asks for you still, Elisabeth," Uncle Roger said.

"Nelson? Of course, Nelson Lodge. Well, how is Nelson?"

"Doing fine. He has a piece of three hundred thirty-eight acres now that his uncle has passed away. Comes round to see us almost every evening. He's never married, you know."

Her mother shook her head sympathetically, and tried to conceal a smile.

There was a long silence.

* * *

"Isn't that Nelson coming now?" she asked. "He doesn't change at all, does he?"

"No, he doesn't change at all," her brother said. "He's not one of these changeable people."

The same half-smile was on her mother's mouth. Uncle Roger was very serious and not at all subtle. But her mother could never be serious about Nelson Lodge, whoever he was, Julie could see.

Nelson was glad to see them. He shook hands with them cordially. He was short and bald and reddened by the outdoors. Nelson Lodge handled real estate.

"There's been many a change in these parts, Elisabeth, since last you were here. I'd like to show you, and your daughter, too, the new things and some of the old ones," he offered.

"I must confess I don't see many new things, Nelson," her mother said.

"Well, now, there's Roger's barns that have been painted not two years."

She nodded. "Maybe so, but they were painted when I left." She laughed. "So it just looks fine as ever."

Nelson was undiscouraged. "Did you hear about the new consolidated school down to Bridger?"

"I heard about it from Roger. What about the old one? I was going to ask Roger to find out about it but perhaps you can tell me." Her mother was leaning forward. Why should that interest her, Julie wondered.

"Sure is a fine one. Five hundred capacity. And takes in five towns."

"You mean the new one. What about the old one?"

"The old school? Well, now, it's just boarded up."

"Nelson," she said, "I wonder if you'd ask whether I couldn't rent it."

Uncle Roger and Aunt Mary Ellen and Nelson all moved forward in their chairs.

"Sure will. Some artist looked at it a while ago. Wanted it for a studio. The township asked ten dollars a month and he thought that was too high. Elisabeth, would that interest you as a residence?" Nelson was trying hard to maintain a businesslike air that excluded curiosity, and not succeeding too well.

"No, not a residence," said her mother.

Resourcefulness, observed Uncle Roger, ran in the Berwick family, but said no more about it, and though Aunt Mary Ellen looked from one to the

other questioningly, she did not put her questions into words.

Mr. Lodge bid them good night cheerfully and promised to be by first thing in the morning with more information about the schoolhouse.

On her way upstairs to bed, Julie inquired, "But why a schoolhouse, Mother?"

Her mother faced Julie on the narrow stairs before going on. Even in the dim light from above, Julie could see the excitement in her face.

"I guess I can tell you now. It seems so close to a reality, Julie, I guess I can. I wouldn't have liked to tell you about a plan that wouldn't have worked, Julie. We're going to try an experiment. If it works this summer, we can do it every summer."

"If what works?" They were in their room now.

"I want us to have this summer together. It would be easy to spend all that I'd saved on a vacation but I'm going to try to have the vacation with you and keep what I've saved too. Grandmother Berwick's things are valuable and many people are eager to have them. All that old pine and cherry can be lovely if it's cleaned up and waxed. Can you guess now?"

"Do you mean to make the schoolhouse into an antique shop?"

"Of course. The schoolhouse is on a road that many summer people travel, going back to the city."

"Are there enough of Grandmother's things to keep us all summer?"

"If we sell them, we'll go about looking in other people's attics. And we can buy more of the sort of things I know people want. You remember how much Mrs. Aspinwall wanted the carved walnut chest. She is the one who set me thinking. And it's a way to change our old way of living for a new one. All summer we can be together, Julie, all day long. I hope you're going to like helping me. I'd almost counted on it."

"Oh, Mother, I'll love it. And what do we do at the end of the summer?"

"Well, when the season's done, I've a choice of things to do. I hadn't quite thought that far ahead. Perhaps if things go well here, we'll find a little shop in New York and then, after school hours, we can still be together."

"But, suppose, Mother—"

"You *are* cautious, Julie. Suppose they don't go well? Well then, we've lost not a thing. We've still had a lovely summer together, and still used only our vacation money. And Winterich's is always there. I've taken only a ten-week leave of absence

and they expect me to come back. But I know we'll sell things at the schoolhouse."

In bed her mother started a sentence, and fell asleep before it was completed. Beside her mother she lay awake smelling the perfume of the peonies and the sweet linen smell of sheets that had hung in the sun and thinking how far they were from the room with the view of the brownstone roofs. She thought she heard her name called. She listened, holding her breath.

Yes, from the bottom of the back stairs Aunt Mary Ellen was calling her softly.

"Julie? Come down, Julie, can you?"

She knew her way now, even in the dark. She tiptoed out of the room and went down. On the kitchen table Aunt Mary Ellen had laid out a white napkin and on it set a plate with two raspberry tarts and a glass of milk.

They sat together in the kitchen while Julie drank the milk and ate the tarts.

"Would you play for me a bit, Julie, tomorrow, while I'm working in the kitchen, straightening up after dinner? You know I do enjoy a little music, and not the radio kind either."

"Why, of course, Aunt Mary Ellen."

"I do love music, Julie."

She wanted to tell her about the harp and the singing but it would need explaining and would bring in telling her about her father. They did not want to hear of him here and she did not want to speak of him now. Not at the moment. Perhaps another time.

Her aunt was washing the glass and Julie waited, towel in hand, to polish it.

"And how is your father, Julie?" Aunt Mary Ellen whispered like a conspirator. "Uncle Roger is set on holding a grudge against him but I used to think he was an attractive looking young man. You do look like your father, Julie. He played beautifully on that organ."

Julie felt sudden warm affection for her Aunt Mary Ellen. She was deeply grateful to her. Yet Aunt Mary Ellen would have to be told. Right now. Like taking out a splinter. Quick, painful, there!

"My father is divorcing my mother. We hardly see him."

Aunt Mary Ellen gently took the glass from Julie and polished it another lick, then put it in the cupboard. She said at last, "Well, then, there is nothing more to be said. But he was an attractive looking young man."

And since no more was to be said, Aunt Mary

Ellen went on to say it. "Your Uncle Roger will say that your mother has wasted half her life. He's said that for a long time now." She looked at Julie and her face took on a look of amusement. "I'm being very free with Elisabeth's life, I suppose, but seeing you're here and just taking a guess about the kind of girl you are, Julie, I can't say I'd agree with him. Don't tell him I said so. That will have to be a secret we have together. Let him find out about you for himself. Now run up to bed. We Berwicks get up early. Good night," she said and then, surprising Julie, quickly kissed her forehead.

It was the way it had been on the train, waiting breathlessly, when Aunt Mary Ellen began to talk, for the end of the story and knowing the end and glad it came out the way it did.

* * *

In the morning Nelson Lodge was seated in a wicker rocker waiting on the porch when they came down. Exactly as if he had been sitting there through the night.

"Good morning, ladies. The township still sticks to its price of ten dollars. But two hundred and fifty dollars will buy it. There's a nice yard of about an acre around it."

Her mother looked very calm, Julie thought, considering the state of her mind.

"I suppose we can have a look at it," she said, "though I shouldn't have to after the years I spent inside."

"Those days don't seem far off at all," Nelson said.

The schoolhouse of clapboard was a large light room built sturdily on a stone foundation. A four-bulb electric light was suspended from the ceiling and there was, besides, a back room furnished with a coal stove and a sink and small cupboard.

Julie examined the outside and looked at the huge expanse that Nelson called a yard, then came back inside to the back room of the schoolhouse. If a partition could be put up and a small part of the sitting-bedroom built into a kitchen and bathroom, why, she wondered, couldn't they live here too?

The thought seemed to have come to her mother too. "This will make a lovely little sitting room and kitchen and bathroom," she said, "and we'll be saving the rent at the Inn at Bridger where we'd have had to stay unless we moved right in on Uncle Roger."

"We'll take it," she told Nelson. "If you'll have it cleaned and painted white inside, flat white, I'll be

glad to pay for the work and appreciate your helping us. I'd like to rent for three months with the option of buying at the end of that time. We're planning to sell antiques here."

"It'll sure be fine to have you back at Vernal Bank. Everyone in these parts sure missed you."

"Now we must be getting back to the place and getting back to New York. I'll write you, Nelson."

They shook hands all round on the transaction and Nelson Lodge drove them back to the house. "I'll be looking for you, Elisabeth. Good-by, Julie."

* * *

It was a big dinner and Aunt Mary Ellen had worked hard all morning to make it so. It seemed to Julie she had not stopped eating for hours. The chicken alone would have been enough but Aunt Mary Ellen was bringing in more and more food. There were potatoes and salad and greens and more vegetables and raspberry tarts and apple pie. Everything was on the table at once. Julie felt as lazy as Tom who was stretched out in the spot of sun near the hot stove.

Moving slowly after dinner, she helped bring the dishes to the kitchen while her mother and her aunt began to wash them. She glanced at the clock. Even

if they missed the train back she would have to play for Aunt Mary Ellen. She began polishing the plates and glasses and at last put down the last shining dish.

"I'd like to try the organ again, Aunt Mary Ellen. May I?"

"Indeed yes."

Now she pulled stops and pumped the air as if she had been playing the Berwick organ all her life. Just as it had been suddenly easy to sing for Mr. Hudek it was now easy to play on the organ. She began to play the piano accompaniment for her song for the Festival.

Alas, my love, you do me wrong . . .

came a voice from the kitchen. It was not her mother's voice. She listened as she played. It was Aunt Mary Ellen whose voice was rich and deep and like Miss Saunders'. So she knew "Green-sleeves," too, and all the words of three verses. It was a strong bond of friendship.

Aunt Mary Ellen and her mother came into the parlor.

"I love your voice, Aunt Mary Ellen. Is it late?" She turned away from the organ to her mother.

"No, but we'll have to be getting ready now."

"And to think," her aunt said, "that it was only because the organ was too heavy."

"Too heavy?" her mother inquired.

"Yes, Roger was all for putting it up in the attic along with the rest of your things but it was too heavy to move up there." She shook her head. "My, my," she said, as though they had narrowly averted a catastrophe. "Now Julie can play any time she wants." Aunt Mary Ellen was reminding her again of the warm and happy coming-home feeling. All over again. *I'd shelter thee. I'd shelter thee.*

* * *

They were taking the Dodge to bring them to the station, the burned-out bearing having been replaced by Sam.

"Our land goes down to the highway now, Elisabeth," her brother said when they had started off.

"The main highway? Why, that's miles away."

"Got a piece of three hundred acres last summer."

"Good," she said. She sat in the front with Uncle Roger. Julie could see her mother's profile from the back where she sat with her aunt. There was something she had rarely seen before in her mother's face. It was not only that she held her head high and that she looked so interestedly about her, but all the

tiredness had suddenly gone out of her face. She was looking about, Julie thought, as if she had discovered something bright and new and highly precious.

They came to the station almost ten minutes before train time. Aunt Mary Ellen and Julie began leisurely to walk along the length of the platform but Roger Berwick and his sister stood talking together.

In the clear mild air the words floated to Julie.

"I'm pleased," Uncle Roger said, "you're coming back home."

"I'm pleased to come back, Roger, even if it's only for the summer. I hope I make a go of it."

"Are you rid of him finally?" he asked, the words sharpened by his tone. Anger was beneath it, and a stubbornness.

Aunt Mary Ellen, hearing him, too, slipped her arm inside Julie's. You had been happy and carefree and suddenly at the very moment when you least expected it, a quick pain stabbed at you. You felt a hot surge of anger and, following it, misery. She did not hear her mother's answer. Perhaps she did not answer.

Then she heard her mother say slowly, "Don't be bitter, Roger. It's over now, altogether. As long as there's Julie, I don't mind any part of it. You'll love her, too, when you know her."

"I wouldn't be so foolish as to hold anything against Julie," he said.

There was the faraway beginning sound of a train whistle, long, louder, flattened by hills, broad now and in the clear, and train wheels grinding. Now there was a slowing down sound, a hissing sound. Then the trainmen's voices.

"Train for New York—New York train—five minute stop—five minute stop. F-i-v-e m-i-n-u-t-e-s. Poughkeepsie."

Her mother had been right, of course. Jeff would always be her father. No one could change that. And she could not help loving him. Even he himself could not change that. If she remembered only the happy times, forgot the unhappy ones, she could not help herself. She could not help loving him, and she would always have to be loyal to him.

Her Aunt Mary Ellen was holding her arm tightly, as they walked toward the others. They stood together now. All four of them.

Uncle Roger said, "When are you planning to come up to stay? We'll fix up the downstairs bedroom and have a separate room for Julie."

Her mother said quickly, "We wouldn't dream of disturbing you, Roger and Mary Ellen. We're going to fix up the back room of the schoolhouse."

"Nonsense," he said, "nonsense. It's your house same as it's mine, Elisabeth. Always was. Always

will be. First thing I do when I get back to the house is tear up the agreement he and you signed. The family has to stay in the house. And the house has to stay in the family.”

Her mother was looking at her brother as she used to look sometimes while she read a story to her, years ago. When the story was sad, her mother’s voice sounded for a second as if she, too, were going to cry over it. And then she’d stop and look at Julie, and Julie, who was just as close to tears over the forsaken princess or the children that followed the Pied Piper, would look at her mother and neither would say a word and they would both swallow hard. And then it was over. And her mother would go on reading. Now she saw her mother was swallowing hard.

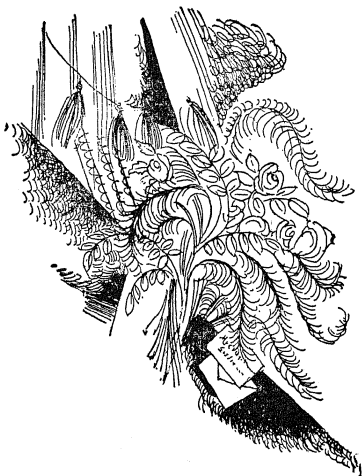
“Roger,” she said, “I can’t let you be so generous.”

“Nonsense,” he said, and again, “nonsense.”

As though he had forgotten something he held out a hand to Julie. “Good-by, Julie,” he said. “You’ve got a big girl here, Elisabeth.”

Her mother suddenly leaned toward Aunt Mary Ellen and kissed her and turned to her brother and kissed him too.

“Good-by, Mary Ellen and Roger. It’ll be at least two weeks before we come up for the summer. School won’t be over until then. Anyway, we’ll write. We had a lovely time. Thank you.”



IN the wings the singing came back to Julie only a little muffled by the thick gray curtain behind which she sat.

*By yon bonnie banks
And by yon bonnie braes
Where the sun shines bright
on Loch Lomond . . .*

The Seniors were singing one of Miss Saunders' favorites. It was going to please her because the voices were sure and strong. And the applause was thunderous. Julie hoped they would sing an encore. That would mean she would not have to go out there for another five minutes. She sat on a footstool that had been brought in from the library while Miss Saunders sat across from her as though guarding her and preventing her from running off.

Her black velvet dress caught the brightness that fell on it from the electric bulbs overhead and highlighted the folds. She held the harp tenderly.

Then the applause was over and the thin voice of Mr. Barrett floated back to her. But she could not hear the words.

Miss Saunders stood up and put her trembling hand on Julie's shoulder.

"Now, Julie, be very calm." She was anything but calm as she said it, and added resolutely, "Do your best. No one can do more than that."

Julie felt herself walking as though propelled by Miss Saunders and without any effort on her part at all.

On the platform at the back special guests were seated in a double row.

Mr. Barrett concluded by saying, ". . . Julie

Forrest will sing for us two songs of her own choosing. And—she will *accompany* herself on an authentic Irish harp.” Mr. Barrett emphasized it, it crossed her mind, as if it were some especially difficult trick like singing while performing upon a trapeze.

Now she was by herself, having suddenly been deserted by Miss Saunders and, strangely, to be walking out before a crowded auditorium with her harp in her hands seemed a simple and natural thing to be doing.

Julie stood still for a moment, remembering it was what Mr. Hudek had wanted her to do, waiting for the murmur of conversation to cease. Her head with its loose copper-penny hair seemed lighter than usual and she turned it from one side to the other with a quick gesture.

There was the tall stool that someone had set out for her, forward and center. She went to it and sat on it hooking the heels of her new shining black sandals into the top rung.

She played the introductory arpeggios and muted the strings with her extended hand lightly laid over them.

“*Alas, my love, you do me wrong
To cast me off discourteously . . .*”

she sang. Rows upon rows of faces, eyes upon her, faces lighting up at the loveliness of the tune, enchanted by the tune as she had been when first she had heard Miss Saunders sing it,

*"For I have lovèd you so long
Delighting in your company . . .
Greensleeves was all my joy,
Greensleeves was my delight,
Greensleeves was my heart of gold,
And who but my lady Greensleeves?"*



In the very first row was Anne and beside her was Mrs. Harrison wearing a hat that was a whole flower garden unto itself and on her other side was Hap. At the very back of the auditorium she saw Mrs. Bentley. And was that Mr. Hudek beside her? Yes, of course it was Mr. Hudek. How her mother would have loved to be here now, listening to the second verse of "Greensleeves."

Hap was the first to begin the applause. She saw him. And a great breaking wave of applause followed it, and no sooner had it stopped than it began again. But it was not enough to come out again and bow. She had to play and sing again. She sang "The Minstrel Boy," and "Charlie Is My Darling," and "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes," and then, "O Wert Thou in the Cauld Cauld Blast."

Mr. Barrett at last had to come to stand beside her and put up his hand for silence and beg that she be allowed to rest. Then he led her, not to the wing exit she had come in by, but to a chair on the platform among the special guests.

As the school orchestra began to play "The Stars and Stripes Forever," she sat stiffly there, taking deep breaths, facing the audience, each one of whom she felt was her dear friend.

Then a small hand reached over and clasped hers.

"Mother!" But what a surprise. What a beautiful surprise.

It was over, at last, and Miss Saunders, as pleased as if a great fortune had been bestowed upon her and she irrepressibly wished to share it with all, brought to Julie a dainty bouquet of pale pink rosebuds set in lacy paper.

"For you, Julie, there's a card attached." And in her great excitement and happiness, Miss Saunders handed Julie her purse and clutched the flowers close to her breast.

Julie, standing beside her mother, opened the envelope and hastily read the card and reread it. "From Leslie and Dad, with our love."

She looked at her mother wondering if she ought to show it to her, hating on the instant the familiarity that the double signature implied, not knowing whether she could spare this moment for them. In the meantime here were the dainty little things and she was holding them cupped in her hands.

"It's all right, Julie," her mother whispered. "It's all right. They wanted to know about you and I had to tell them about today. They thought you would not mind if they sent you these. Pin them on. Here, let me."

Mrs. Bentley made her way to her and shook

Julie's hand and said three times before Julie understood, "And, besides, I must tell you. I know you'll be glad to know. Taffy's mother is going to take him home. She's well enough at last."

"Take him home? Does that mean we won't have him any more?"

"*We* won't. But his mother will and I'm sure he'll be glad to have his own two parents." And Mrs. Bentley who was always so careful of what she said was covered with confusion. "But, of course, we'll visit him," she added in haste. "Anyway, it's his last day today and tonight he goes home."

"May I just go to say good-by, right away?"

"Why, of course, Julie, if your friends will let you."

Hap was saying, "You were fine, Julie. And my mother has something important to ask you both, you and your mother. Mother, here's Julie. Ask her, Mother."

Mrs. Harrison said, "I hope, Mrs. Forrest, you and Julie can come home with us. It will only be a small party for the children. They're so proud of Julie they seem not to want her out of their sight and I'd so welcome an evening with you. Won't you?"

"Why, thank you. Of course, we'd love to come. I'm sure Julie will be delighted."

Julie was unaccountably doubtful. "I must go to say good-by to Taffy."

"And who's Taffy?" asked Hap suddenly crest-fallen.

"Taffy's a young man at East House," said Anne, "and I know all about when he eats prunes or something else revolting and when he says, 'Goo,' and why must you go *now* of all times, Julie?"

Julie whispered to Anne.

"Oh, that's different," said Anne. "That's altogether different. Mother, this is important. Julie, suppose Hap and I go with you and then take you back with us."

Hap and Anne and Julie went to East House and Julie went upstairs alone, solemnly thinking, Of course, it's best for him to go to his two parents, just as Mrs. Bentley said, but, Taffy, I'm certainly going to miss you.

* * *

Taffy liked her dress. He listened carefully to the report of the Festival and wanted to hear every one of the songs she had sung. She could tell because he pulled her loose hair with both fists.

The minstrel boy to the war has gone . . .

she sang to Taffy. "And no more until I see you again, Taffy dear. And it'll be soon so don't say another word. And I'm going to a party now, Taffy. A party for me, especially. Well, almost for me, especially. Mother too. What do you think of that, young man?" And she bent low and whispered into his soft, pink ear, "I won't keep you guessing. It's at Hap Harrison's house," wondering as she said it why in the world she had not said "*Anne Harrison's.*"



THE DIVIDED HEART

by MINA LEWITON

*Designed by Howard Simon. Text twelve
point Baskerville, four points leaded.*

Chapter numbers Lydian Cursive.

Hand-lettered chapter initials.

Composition William F. Fell

Company, Philadelphia.

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY



134 130

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY